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epic™

ILLUSTRATED

this issue:

the conclusion of
GENERATION ZERO
by Pepe Moreno

plus:

ROGER ZELAZNY'S
THE GAME OF
BLOOD AND DUST
all new
illustrated version

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THE SACRED & THE PROFANE

THIS VESSEL, ONCE SO FAMILIAR, HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO A DIM AND FRIGHTENING LABYRINTH. IT IS AS IF EVEN OUR MOST FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS ARE BEING BROUGHT TO TASK.

§ IT IS DARK AND QUIET. TOO MUCH LIKE A TOMB FOR ANY OF US TO ADMIT. AND LIKE ALL THOSE IN ST. CATHERINE'S I WALK WITH GUARDED PACE . . . NOT KNOWING FROM ONE MOMENT TO THE NEXT IF THE WALLS AND FLOORS WILL AGAIN CHANGE STATIONS, OR WHETHER ONE OF THE CREATURES WHICH HAVE INFESTED THE SHIP WILL DROP FROM THE SHADOWS.

§ PERHAPS THE DANGER AROUND US IS NOT SO VERY UNLIKE THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST IN THE WILDERNESS — A TEST OF THE LIMITS OF OUR DESPERATION AND OUR FAITH. IF IT IS A PHILOSOPHY OF LIGHT THAT WE PURSUE, WE MUST NOW DO SO IN THE DARK. HOW DOES ONE SAY "GET THEE BEHIND ME, SATAN" TO THE LORD OF DARKNESS WHEN HE SURROUNDS US SO COMPLETELY?

§ IF THE DEATHS OF THE PURIFIERS, THE FLIGHT DECK CREWMEN AND JOHN, THE ORGANIST HAVE SHOWN US ANYTHING IT IS THAT WE HAVE THE WILL TO OPPOSE THE EVIL, BUT NOT THE STRENGTH. AND THAT ONE WITHOUT THE OTHER MUST CERTAINLY LEAD TO DEFEAT.

§ PERHAPS JOSHUA'S HEROISM HOLDS LESS FOR ME THAN I CARED TO BELIEVE. A WARRIOR IS LIMITED BY THE NATURE OF WHAT HE IS. JOAN OF ARC DID NOT PRAISE FIGHTING. BUT SHE FOUGHT.

S. Marianna

c MCMLXXXIII

A STAR † REACH PRODUCTION

By Dean Motter and Ken Steacy

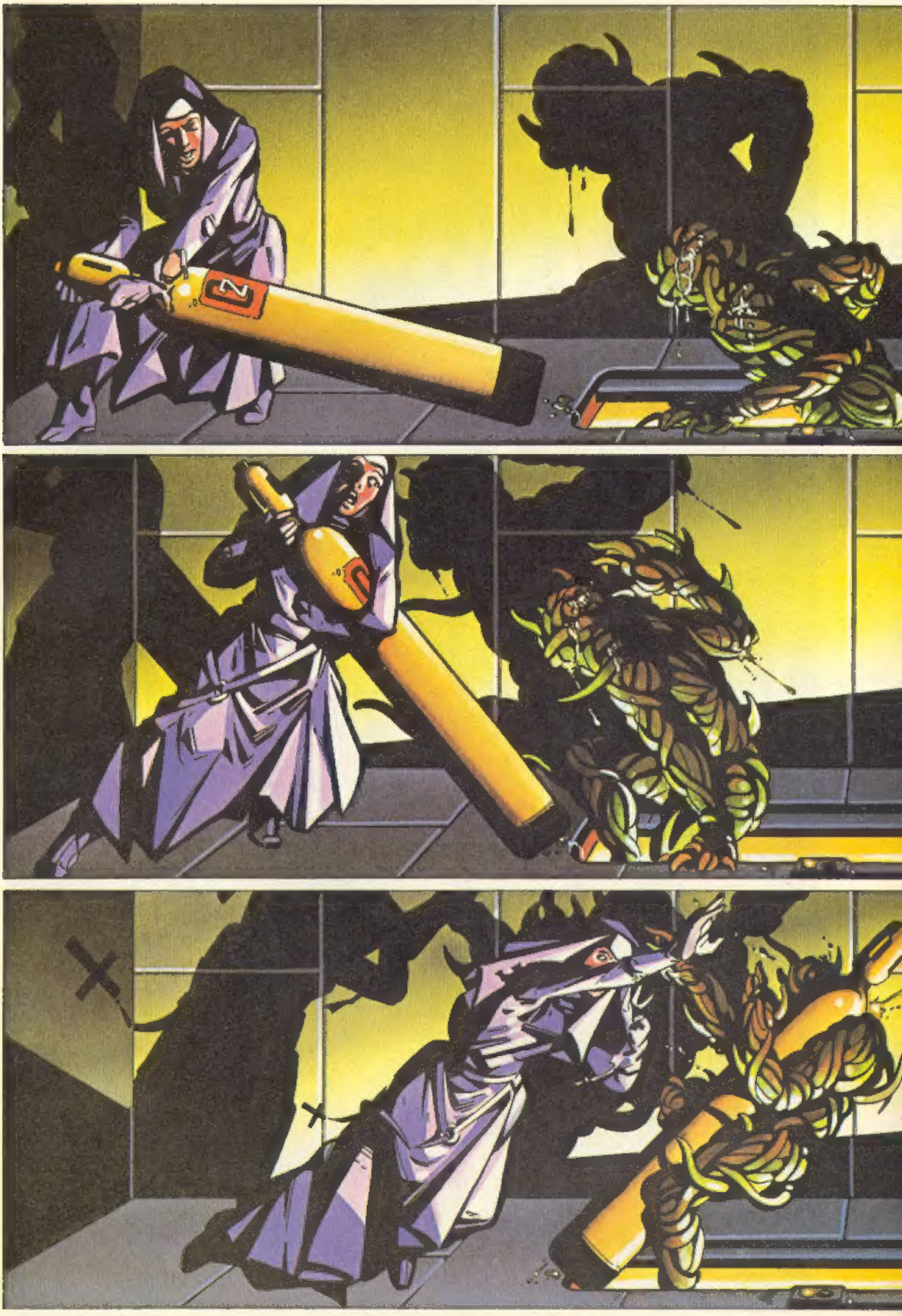
Paths of Abandon
NO, SISTER. LISTEN TO ME, PLEASE. I KNOW I'VE NOT MUCH TIME . . .
NONSENSE. YOU'RE GOING TO BE —
I'M NOT A GOOD MAN, MARIANNA, I'M NOT. I'VE BEEN PLAGUED WITH MANY DOUBTS FOR SO VERY LONG.

BE STILL, BISHOP PLEASE.
I WANT YOU TO RECEIVE MY CONFESSION —
CLINIC X-RAY
NOT SIMPLY DOUBTS OF MYSELF, OR THE MISSION — BUT OF GOD. IT'S SO EASY TO PREACH FROM A BOOK, TO GOVERN, TO COUNSEL. IT'S CAREFULLY LAID DOWN. BUT IT'S NOT SO EASY TO BELIEVE . . . I'VE GONE THROUGH THE MOTIONS — I DON'T BELIEVE . . . I DON'T. I HAVEN'T IN A VERY LONG TIME . . .
SISTER, TAKE CARE OF JOAN. PLEASE, AND WHEN I'M GONE TELL HER —
OF COURSE. I'LL TELL HER THAT YOU LOVE HER.
YES, TELL HER THE TRUTH. TELL HER THAT SHE IS NOT MY NIECE . . . THAT SHE IS MY DAUGHTER . . .

SISTER ELAINE!
SISTER — WHAT'S WRONG?
YOUR HOLINESS?
HOW IS THE REVEREND MOTHER?
FINE . . . FINE. HER VITAL SIGNS ARE IMPROVING . . .
AND THE BISHOP?
NOT AS WELL, I'M AFRAID. HE'S WEAKENING.
WELL . . .
WE ARE IN TROUBLE, AREN'T WE . . .
NO. EVERYTHING IS UNDER CONTROL.

ELAINE! WHAT IS IT — MORE OF THOSE MONSTERS?
NO. NO IT'S ALRIGHT . . . WHAT'S HAPPENING TO US, VICTOR — I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK ANYMORE . . . WHAT TO BELIEVE IN . . .
THERE IS NOTHING LEFT TO BELIEVE IN, SISTER. DIVINE INTERVENTION IS SOMEWHAT OVERDUE. WE MAY BE DOOMED BECAUSE WE HAVE BELIEVED TOO MUCH.
SALVATION LIES IN ACTION, NOW. WE MUST SAVE OURSELVES . . . EACH OTHER . . .
PERHAPS . . .

We are going to need a lot more plasma, Doctor. The Bishop is —



THE SACRED AND THE PROFANE continues next issue

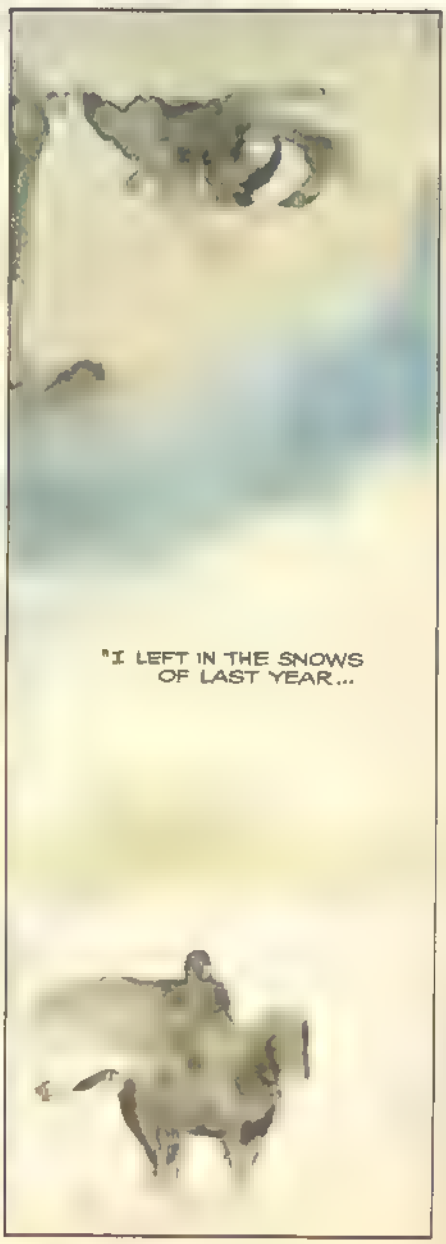
HEAVEN WAS THE LAST GOOD THING LEFT AS ALL OF THE GOOD FLEW SCREAMING FROM THE WORLD AND DIED, IT GATHERED ITSELF IN A SMALL PILE AND FATE QUIETLY LAID A RED ROBE ON TOP OF IT. AND THEN ALTOGETHER THE GOD BECAME ANIMATED. WELL... SOMEWHAT. SLIGHTLY DAZED AND CONFUSED, HE DIDN'T MOVE MUCH. HEAVEN WAS ALL OF THE GOOD FOR A MILLION YEARS.

© 1984 Jon Jay Muth

WELCOME BACK. AND HAVE YOU SLAIN THE FATHER OF LIES?

NO.

I WAS AT HIS MERCY, THEN HE SMILED AND TURNED AWAY. HE IS QUITE VOLATILE.
YOU HAVE BEEN ADVENTURING. WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?


"I LEFT IN THE SNOWS OF LAST YEAR...

THE NONDESCRIPT PATHS YOU SET ME OUT ON SLIPPED THROUGH PALE MILES OF HAUNTED AIR. NUMBINGLY MYSTICAL FORESTS WHERE THE VERY LIGHT THROBBED WITH MAGIC. NEAR QUIET FORGOTTEN CITADELS, THROUGH CITIES TREMBLING WITH PEOPLE.
"ALL ALONG THIS BRITTLE PATH SEEKING THE PRIMEVAL ONE.
FINALLY, IN THE DARK, I COULD SMELL IT.

"I CAME UPON AN ALTARSTONE WHERE A FIGURE LAY QUIVERING WRAPPED IN SILK.

SWIPE
"I LOOKED INTO THE DEMON'S EYES AND SAW THAT IT WAS JUST A FRAGMENT, FIERCE, BUT JUST A MONSTROUS TENTACLE FROM A MUCH GREATER MONSTROSITY.
DOOM
" I'VE NEVER KILLED ANYTHING.

"WHEN I PULLED THE SILK FROM THE FACE I SAW HER. INFINITELY FRAIL, UNTARNISHED BY TIME, WITH EYES SPEAKING TO OLD UNIVERSES. HER HAIR WAS LIKE A RIVER, AND HER SMILE WAS LIKE WATER DANCING. HER BODY MOVED LIKE THE FLIGHT OF BIRDS. I TOLD HER SHE WAS FREE AND ASKED HER TO COME WITH ME.

"I SAID I WOULD BUILD MOUNTAINS FOR HER. I TOLD HER SHE HAD THE MOON HIDING IN HER HAIR AND ASKED IF SHE SLEPT BETWEEN THE STARS. WE SPENT HOURS READING THE SECRETS HIDDEN BEHIND ONE ANOTHER'S EYES.

"I TOLD HER THAT I WAS ON THE LAST QUEST WHEN EVIL WAS GONE THEN GOOD WOULD LIGHTEN.

" SHE LEFT THAT DARK NIGHT. SHE TOOK MY HEART FOR FREE. I FOUND A LETTER SAYING THAT SHE KNEW SOMETHING THAT I WOULD JUST HAVE TO FIND OUT.
"THE NEXT DAY I FOUND THE CAVE.
'A SICKLY SOURNESS FILLED ME AS I WALKED IN. A SOUND.. LIKE THE LAST LIZARD SCREAMING.
SOMETHING DARK AND CHAOTIC MOVED IN THE ROCKS. AND THEN...

YOU HAVE COME TO KILL US WELL, BEWARE! BEWARE OF THINKING WE ARE A LIVING THING WE ARE NOT.

THE EYES OF EVIL CANNOT SEE!
THE LIPS CANNOT SPEAK!
YOU HAVE COME TO SLAY US? W TH WHAT?
YOUR SWORD IS BURIED DEEP WITHIN ONE OF YOUR DEMONS!
MY DEMONS?
YES, YOURS. DID YOU IMAGINE IT WAS ONE OF OURS?
WE ARE AS OLD AS MAN. WE DANCE SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE VISION AND THE RIDDLE. WE ARE NOT SOMETHING ONE CAN TOUCH.
WE WERE INVENTED BY THOSE ADEPT W TH SMALL SLYNESSES AND AROAM WITH IMMENSE FEARS. WE ARE NOT. AND HOPE ..
WE NEVER SHALL BE
"THE EVIL WAS QUIET AND COLD AND SUDDENLY... GONE.

THE EVIL WASN'T.
WAS IT... HEAVEN?

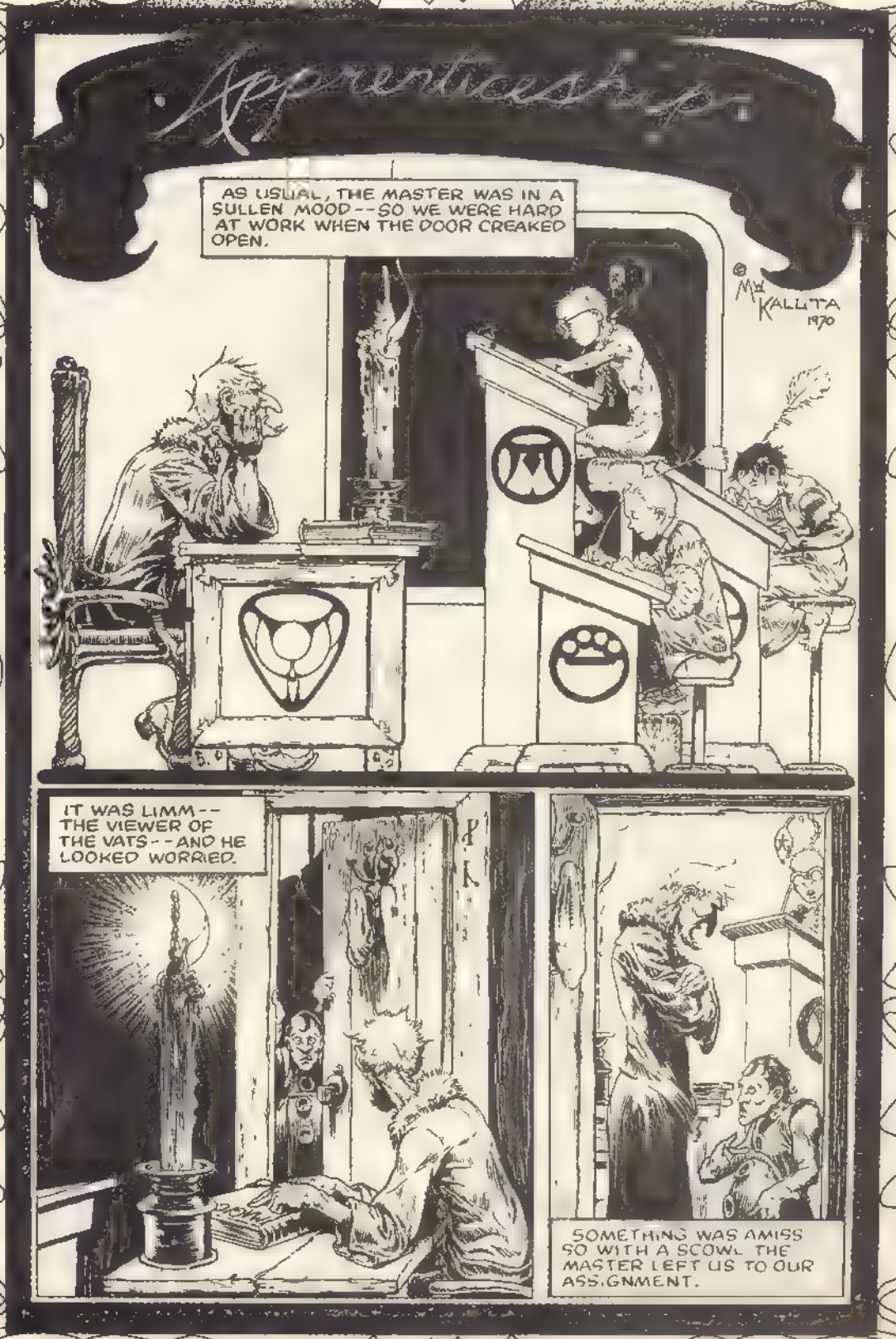
ALL 'IT WAS' S A FRAGMENT, A RIDDLE,
A DREADFUL CHANCE-- UNTIL YOU SAY TO IT
'BUT I WILLED IT TO BE.'
YOU ARE LEARNING.

FINALLY, EVIL HAS TAUGHT
GOOD SOMETHING. I AM
THE DINOSAUR OF BOTH
IGNORANCES.

THERE S NO GOOD.
THERE IS NO EVIL.
THERE IS ONLY LIFE.

I AM THE BREEZE BROUGHT TO GALE
BY TOO MANY PEOPLE'S FEARS AND HATREDS
AND NOTHINGS. I M SO TIRED.

YOU AND THE LIVING
ARE ALL THERE IS
AND NOW I HAVE
PLANTED THAT SPARK
IN YOUR MIND.


Apprenticeship
AS USUAL, THE MASTER WAS IN A SULLEN MOOD--SO WE WERE HARD AT WORK WHEN THE DOOR CREAKED OPEN.
© MW KALUTA 1970
IT WAS LIMM--THE VIEWER OF THE VATS--AND HE LOOKED WORRIED.
SOMETHING WAS AMISS SO WITH A SCOWL THE MASTER LEFT US TO OUR ASSIGNMENT.

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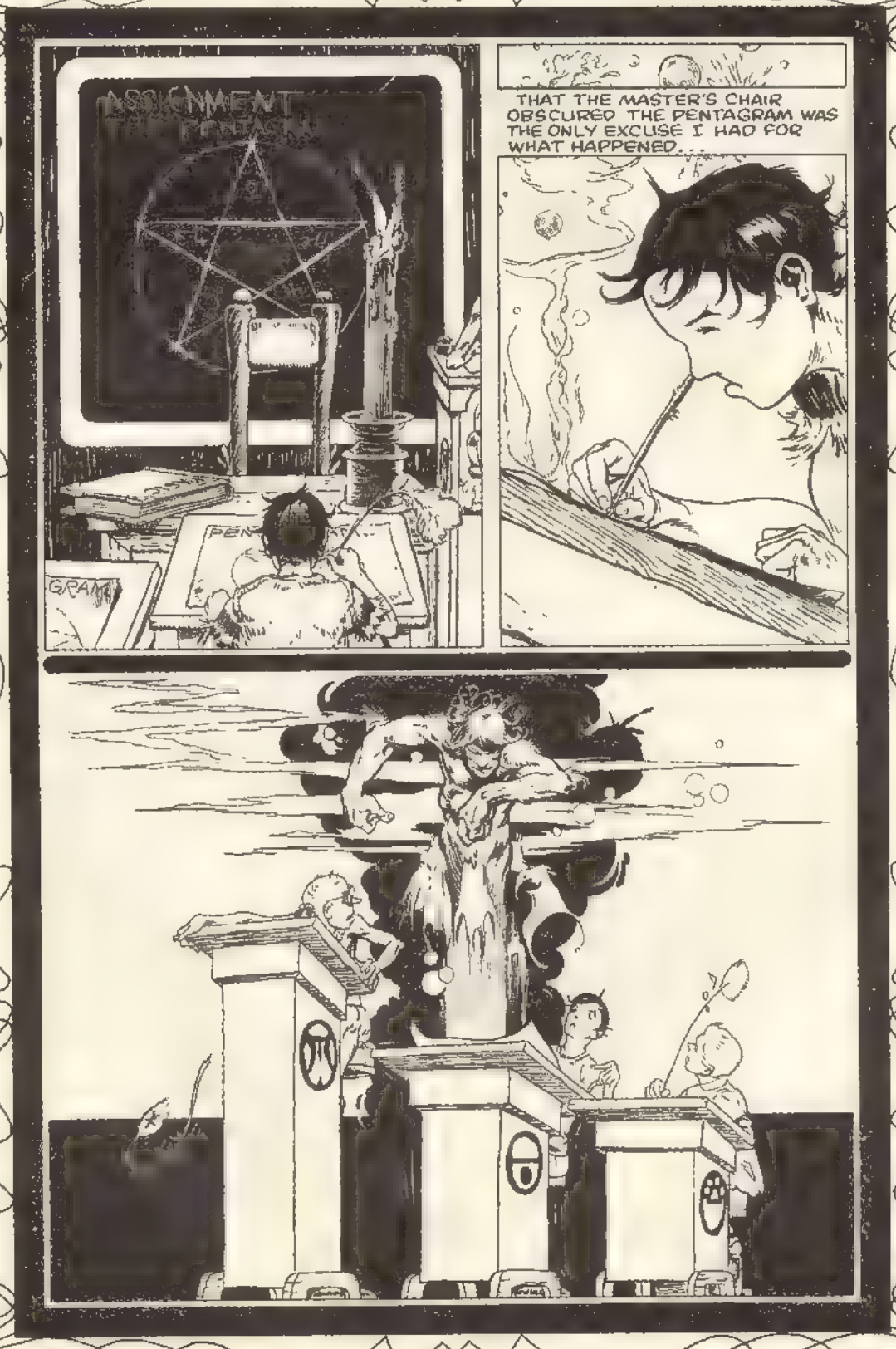
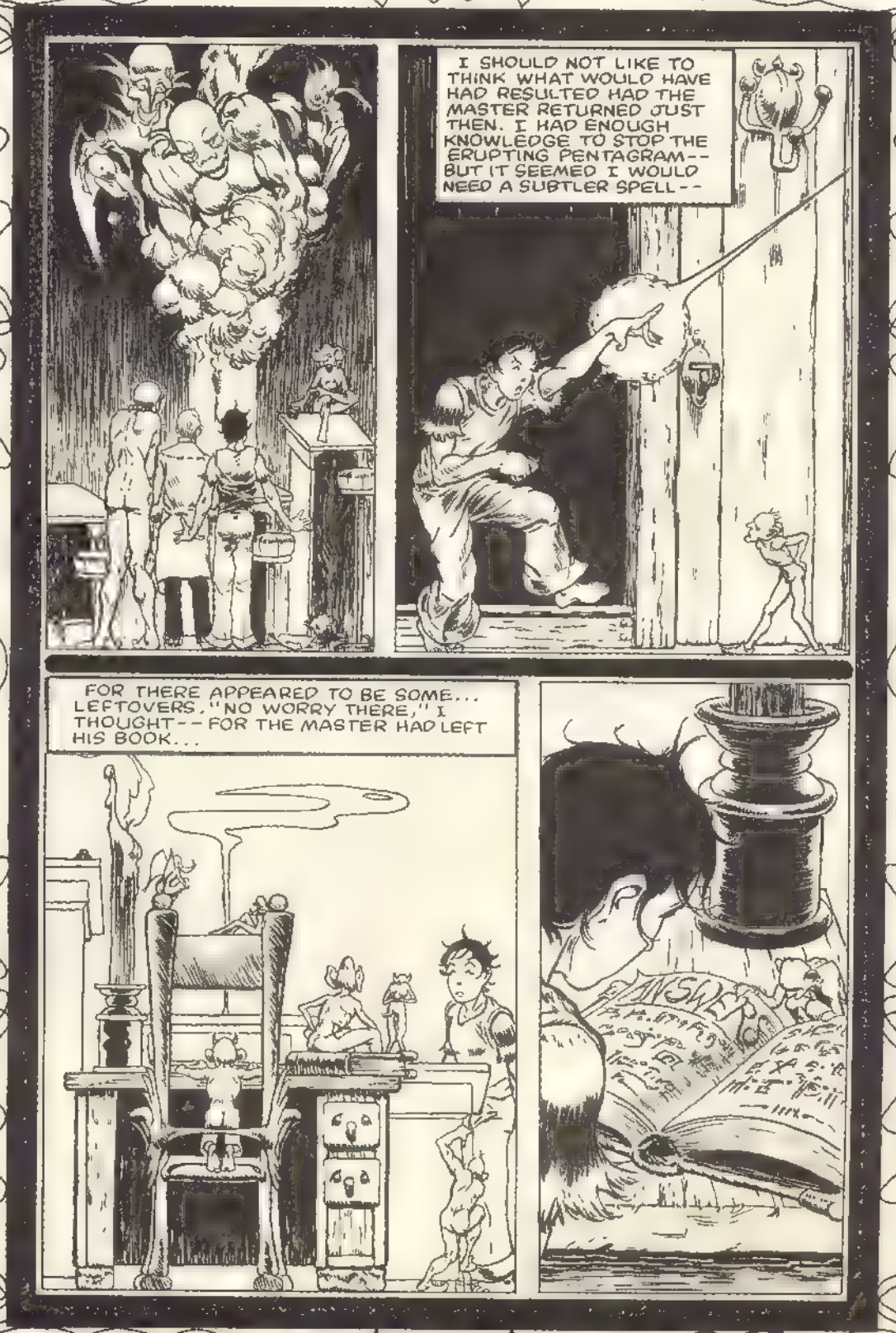
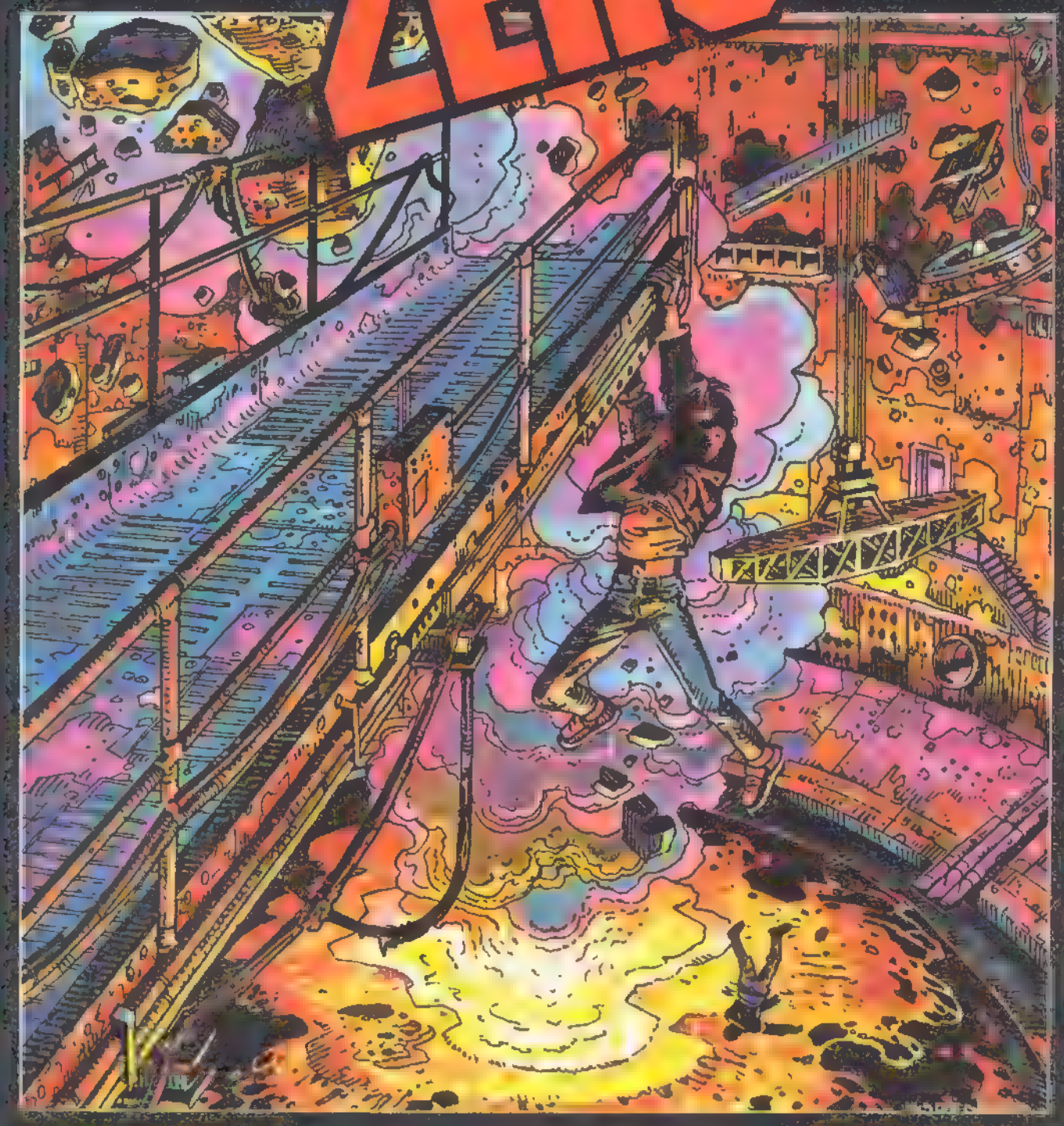

ASSIGNMENT
PEN
GRAM
THAT THE MASTER'S CHAIR OBSCURED THE PENTAGRAM WAS THE ONLY EXCUSE I HAD FOR WHAT HAPPENED...


I SHOULD NOT LIKE TO THINK WHAT WOULD HAVE HAD RESULTED HAD THE MASTER RETURNED JUST THEN. I HAD ENOUGH KNOWLEDGE TO STOP THE ERUPTING PENTAGRAM-- BUT IT SEEMED I WOULD NEED A SUBTLER SPELL--
FOR THERE APPEARED TO BE SOME... LEFTOVERS, "NO WORRY THERE," I THOUGHT-- FOR THE MASTER HAD LEFT HIS BOOK...
ANSWERS

... AND THAT FIXED THAT! EVEN THE LAST TRACES OF SMOKE AND SULPHUR HAD DISSIPATED BY THE TIME THE MASTER RETURNED "OH--HOW CRAFTY," I THOUGHT TO MYSELF... A BIT PREMATURELY.
AS SOON AS THE MASTER SAT DOWN I KNEW MY APPRENTICE-SHIP WOULD BE LONG AND EVENTFUL.
I DIDN'T SIT DOWN FOR A WEEK

GENERATION ZERO



FACE TO FACE

BROM!
TOTAL WAR. IT SWEEPS OVER SEAHAVEN LIKE A TIDAL WAVE AND THE ISLAND SANCTUARY--PEACEFUL, NEAR IDEAL REFUGE IN A WORLD STILL RECOVERING FROM NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST--SHUDDERS UNDER ITS RELENTLESS WAGING. FOR THIS IS A WAR OF ATTRITION...
MORRIS

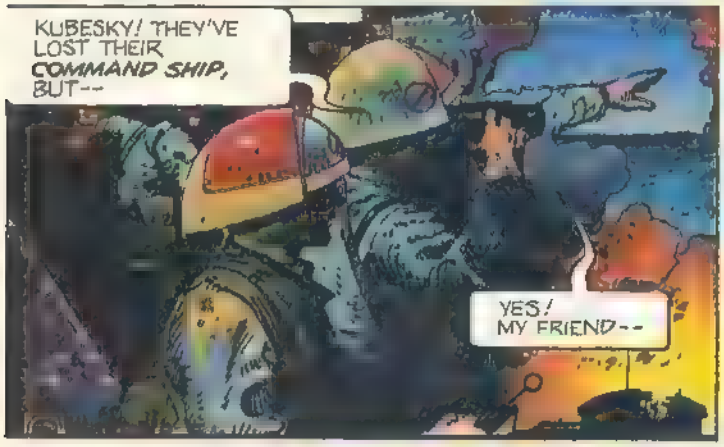
WAMP!
FWSSSSSSS
PDUM!
.. A WAR OF SWIFT AND DEVASTATING SACRIFICE, OF GRINDING DOWN...

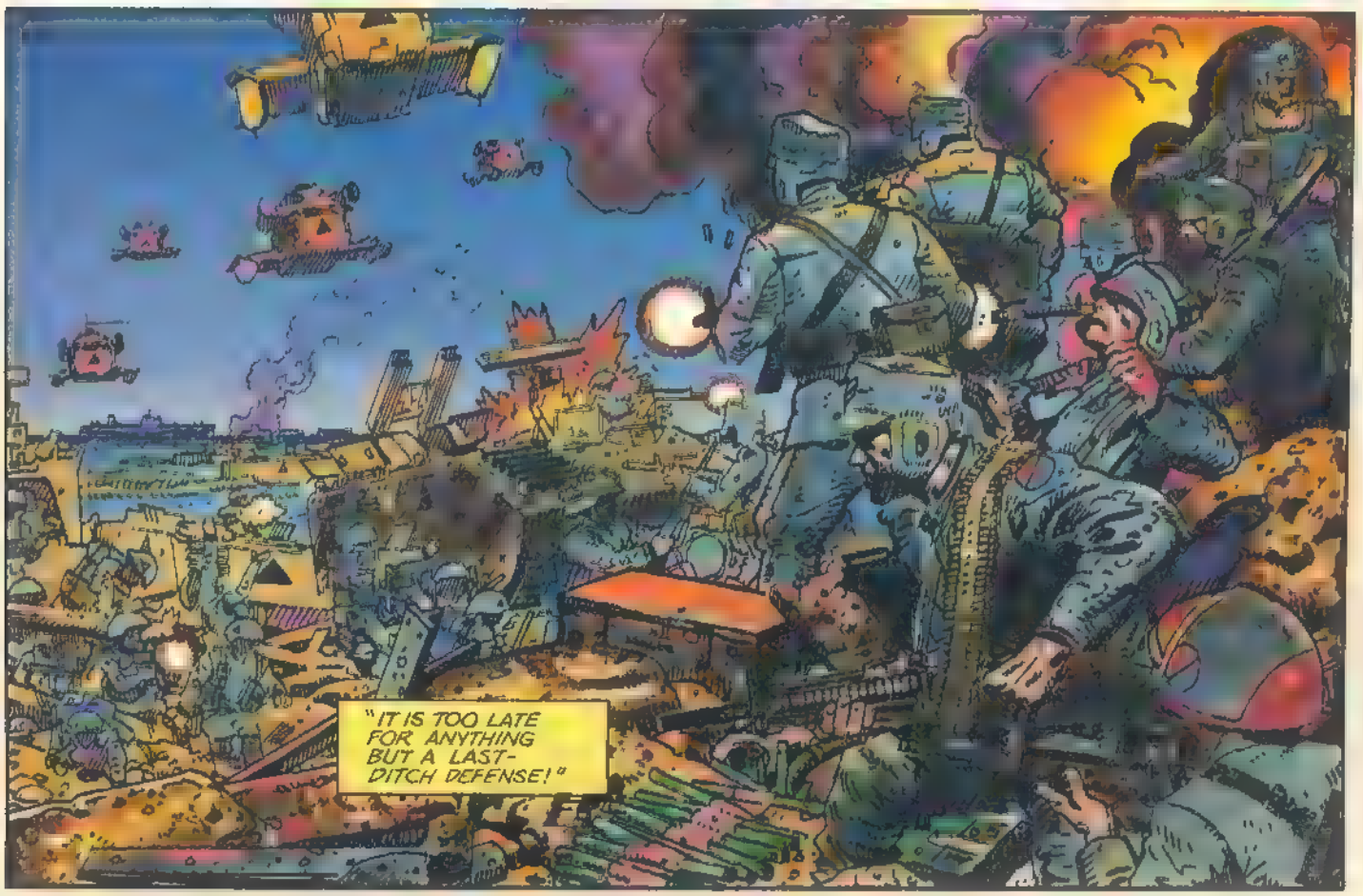
...AND THE INVADING FORCES RISEN OUT OF THE RED SEA DESERT, ENSLAVING, CONQUERING, GROWING -- HAVE THE MEN AND MACHINES TO SUSTAIN SUCH A FIGHT. SEAHAVEN -- OBVIOUSLY TO BOTH SIDES -- DOES NOT.
CEASE BOMBARDMENT! ORDER ALL SHIPS IN CLOSE TO BACK OUR FINAL ASSAULT!
FWOOOSH!
THE BEACHHEAD AND TROOP-TO-TROOP COMBAT WI... BE COSTLY SIR...AND DANGEROUS. YOU STILL INTEND TO OBSERVE FIRSTHAND?
UNTIL THE LAST DEFENDER FALLS! THE ULTIMATE FATE OF SOME INDIVIDUALS AT SEAHAVEN INTERESTS ME--
"--PERSONALLY."
THAT CHROME-POTTED BASTARD'S GOTTA BE ON HIS COMMAND SHIP... THINKIN' IT'S ALL OVER BUT THE BUTCHER WORK.
RRRRRMMM!
WELL, MAYBE SOMEONE ELSE WILL DO THE CARVIN'!

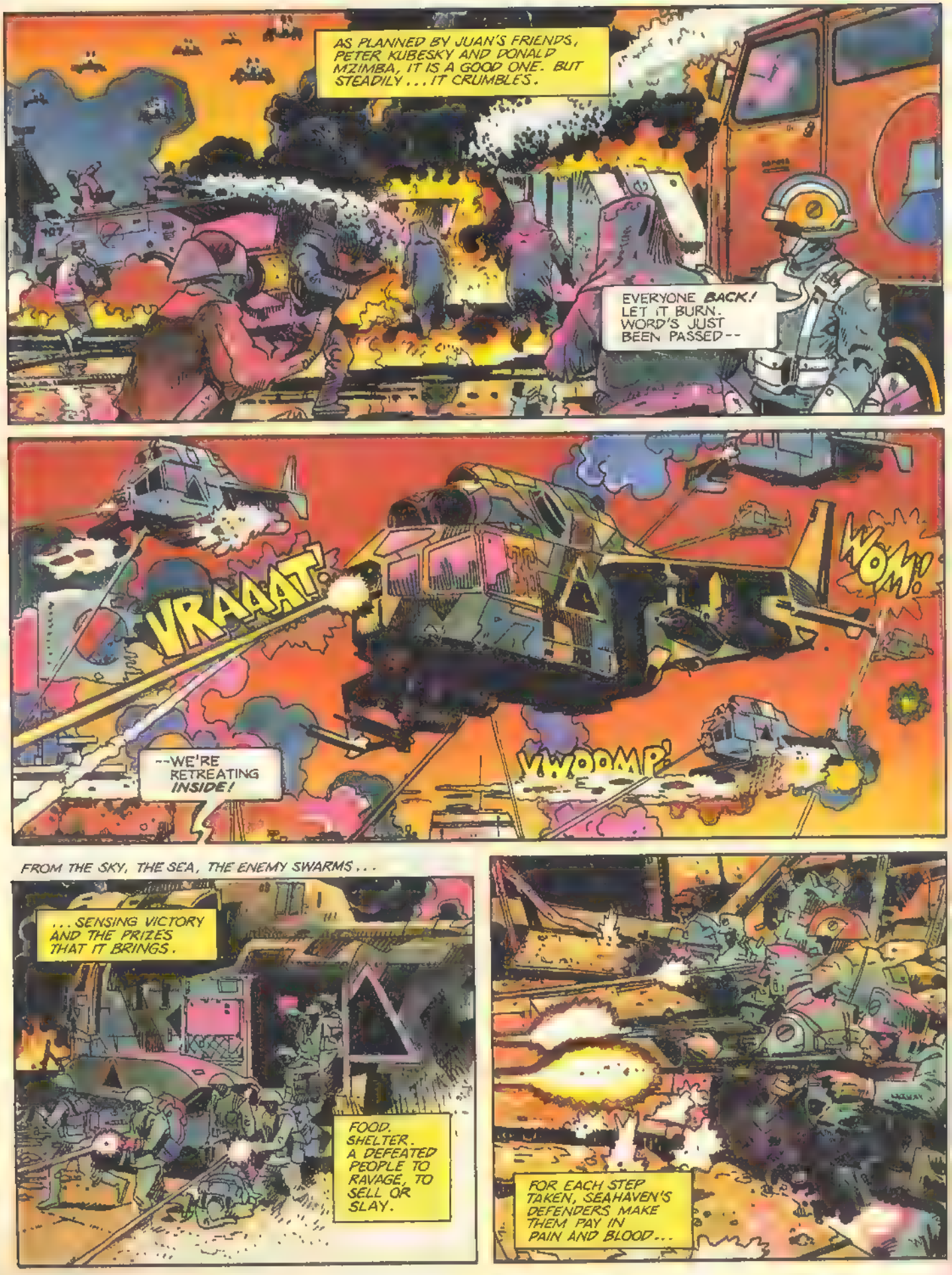
AND GUIDED BY HIS OWN DESPERATE RAGE, JUAN FALCÓN PLOWS WILDLY INTO THE ADVANCING ENEMY SHIPS.
WHOEVER YOU ARE UNDER THAT DAMN HELMET, YOU'VE MAYBE KILLED THE WOMAN I LOVE... RUINED THE ONLY PLACE FOR ME SINCE THE WAR THAT'S FELT LIKE HOME...
...AND SOMEHOW YOU'VE MANAGED TO MAKE MY UNCLE RAOUL AND ALL OUR OTHER STRAIGHT-LACED ALLIES AT NORTHOLD COLONY--
--FEEL THAT MY FATHER HAD TURNED TRAITOR AND THROWN IN WITH YOUR BUNCH! I OWE YOU PLENTY, AMIGO. AN' IT'S SURE AS HELL TIME TO PAY!
COMMANDER! WE THOUGHT ALL THE SEAHAVEN INTERCEPTOR CRAFT WERE DESTROYED, BUT ONE SEEMS TO HAVE--
ONE BOAT? I'M EMBARKING ON THE FINAL STAGE OF BATTLE. DON'T TELL ME ABOUT ONE BOAT... DESTROY IT!
POM POM POM!
THEY TRY...
PTOW
PTOW
..BUT JUAN PILOTS HIS CRAFT WITH NEAR MANIACAL FURY AND RESOLVE. THE RECKLESS, ILLOGICAL PATH HE CUTS...
...IS DIFFICULT TO ANTICIPATE, ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO BLOCK!
H-HE'S.. IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FLEET! HEADED FOR... FOR..

THE COMMAND SHIP!
POW
KTOW
STOP HIM! STOP HIM NOW!
CAPTAIN, MOST OF OUR GUNS ARE STILL TARGETED FOR LONG RANGE! WE'RE ADJUSTING, BUT--
JUST A LITTLE CLOSER, YOU BASTARDS! JUST... A... LITTLE...
BROM
POUM
FWOOOOOM
TORPEDOES! HARD TO PORT OR THEY'LL--
KABOOM!

.. BUT SEAHAVEN HAS NO CHANCE TO CELEBRATE THE ACT.

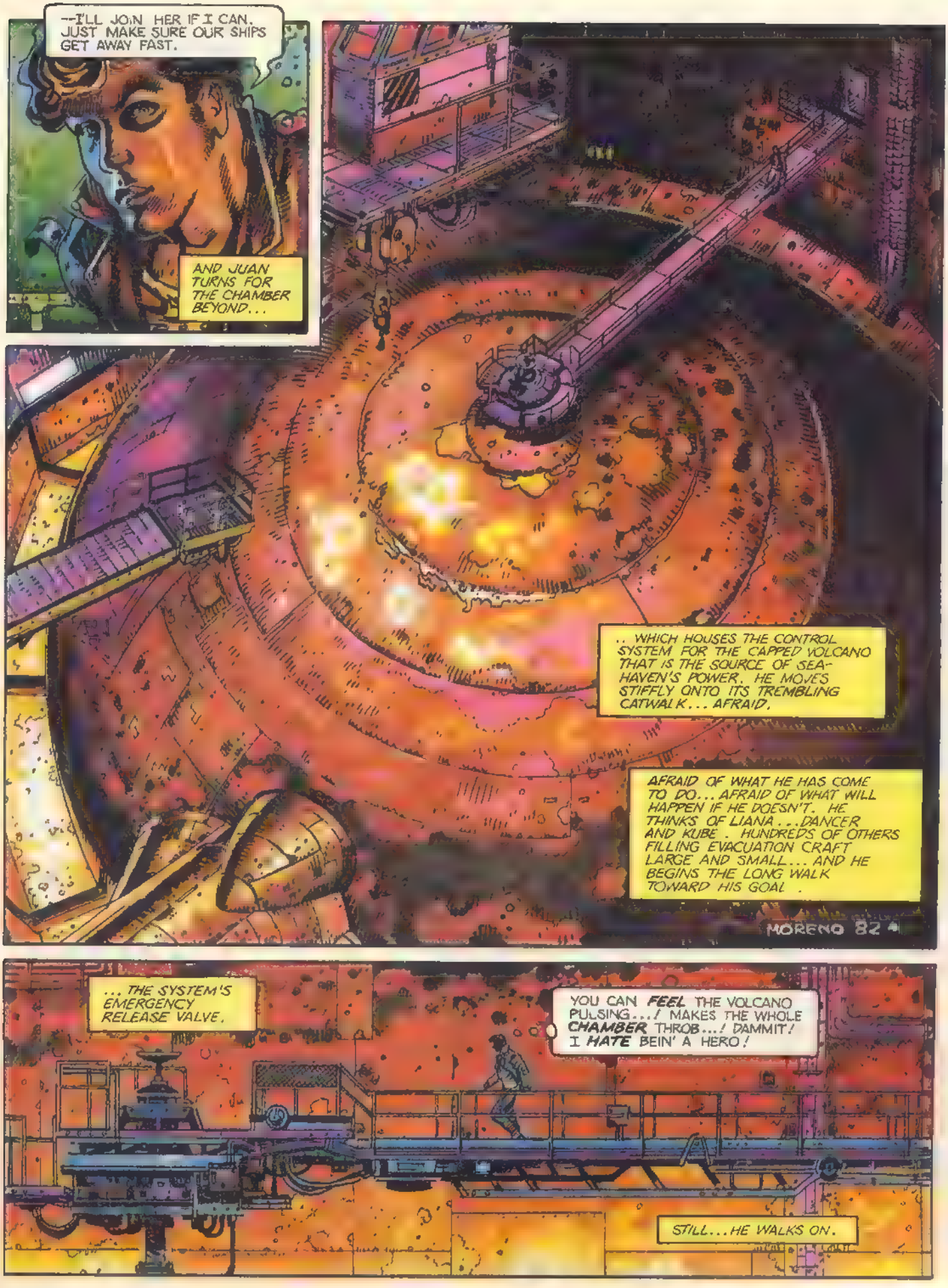





AS PLANNED BY JUAN'S FRIENDS, PETER KUBESKY AND DONALD MZIMBA, IT IS A GOOD ONE. BUT STEADILY . . . IT CRUMBLES.
EVERYONE BACK! LET IT BURN. WORD'S JUST BEEN PASSED--
VRAAAT!
WOM!
--WE'RE RETREATING INSIDE!
VWOOMP!
FROM THE SKY, THE SEA, THE ENEMY SWARMS . . .
. . . SENSING VICTORY AND THE PRIZES THAT IT BRINGS.
FOOD. SHELTER. A DEFEATED PEOPLE TO RAVAGE, TO SELL OR SLAY.
FOR EACH STEP TAKEN, SEAHAVEN'S DEFENDERS MAKE THEM PAY IN PAIN AND BLOOD . . .

...BUT TERRIBLY, INEVITABLY, THEY STILL COME
THIS IS THEIR REAR GUARD, SIR...LANDING ZONE IS NEARLY SECURE. THE STRIKE ON OUR COMMAND SHIP JUST AFTER WE TOOK YOU ALOFT HASN'T CHANGED THE OUTCOME--
--SEAHAVEN IS OURS, COMMANDER FALCON!
YES--
--EXCEPT FOR MOPPING UP. I INTEND TO PARTICIPATE... AND CUT SHORT ANY LAST MINUTE SURPRISES.
DOWNSTAIRS! DOWN! SEAL EVERY DOOR, BLAST EVERY CORRIDOR AS WE GO!
THEY'RE SWARMING ALL OVER UP THERE BUT THE MORE WE SLOW THEIR PROGRESS--
"--THE BETTER CHANCE OUR PEOPLE AT THE DOCKS HAVE OF EVACUATING!"

IT HAS COVERED HIS OWN ESCAPE. NOTHING ELSE. IT IS ALL OVER.
IN THE ISLAND CITY'S DEPTHS...
JUAN FALCÓN MOVES GRIMLY. HE HAS SEEN HOW INEFFECTIVE HIS SMALL VICTORY WAS.
THIS WAY... FASTER! THE LAST SHIP IS LOADING... MOVE!
FALCÓN! KUBESKY AND MZIMBA ARE OVERSEEING THE EVACUATION. WHY HAVEN'T YOU JOINED THEM?
HUH? DANCER AN' KUBE ARE OKAY? GREAT! B-BUT--
WAIT! EVACUATING WON'T WORK! ENEMY SHIPS AN' AIRCRAFT'LL SWARM OVER YOU LIKE SHARKS IN NO TIME! IT'S NO GOOD UNLESS--
BEEOW!
HEY! THAT'S NOT THE WAY TO THE DOCKS! HEY!
UNLESS...
ONE SIDE! OUT OF THE WAY!
I'VE GOT AN IDEA!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, FALCÓN? WE'RE THE LAST OF IT! YOU'RE GOING TO BE LEFT!
VOW!
PLOK!
ZING!
GO! AN IF LIANA--ADMINISTRATOR ADEN--IS ALL RIGHT, TELL HER... TELL HER... HELL! ALL THAT'S REALLY IMPORTANT, SHE ALREADY KNOWS! JUST SAY--


--I'LL JOIN HER IF I CAN. JUST MAKE SURE OUR SHIPS GET AWAY FAST.
AND JUAN TURNS FOR THE CHAMBER BEYOND...
.. WHICH HOUSES THE CONTROL SYSTEM FOR THE CAPPED VOLCANO THAT IS THE SOURCE OF SEA-HAVEN'S POWER. HE MOVES STIFFLY ONTO ITS TREMBLING CATWALK... AFRAID.
AFRAID OF WHAT HE HAS COME TO DO... AFRAID OF WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF HE DOESN'T. HE THINKS OF LIANA...DANCER AND KUBE. HUNDREDS OF OTHERS FILLING EVACUATION CRAFT LARGE AND SMALL... AND HE BEGINS THE LONG WALK TOWARD HIS GOAL.
MORENO 82
... THE SYSTEM'S EMERGENCY RELEASE VALVE.
YOU CAN FEEL THE VOLCANO PULSING.../ MAKES THE WHOLE CHAMBER THROB.../ DAMMIT! I HATE BEIN' A HERO!
STILL...HE WALKS ON.

UNTIL..
OKAY...! THIS WAS MEANT TO RELIEVE PRESSURE... IF REGULAR ELECTRICAL SYSTEM... FAILED...
ONLY... 'STEADA OPENIN' IT... I'M GONNA... SHUT IT... T-TIGHT!
THERE...!
NO--
IT'S NOT SO SIMPLE TO SAVE THE DAY, JUANITO. YOU WERE ALWAYS THE MOST IMPULSIVE MEMBER OF THE FAMILY.
WHO..?
ASK ANYONE IN NORTHOLD. THEY WEREN'T SO STUBBORNLY SLOW AT ACCEPTING THE HINTS... THE RUMORS. AND TODAY ...TODAY WILL BE BEST OF ALL.
WE'VE STOPPED JAMMING SATELLITE COMMUNICATION. THEY'RE SEEING ALL THIS, JUAN.
WE WANT THEM TO WATCH SEAHAVEN CRUMBLE... AND FEAR. THEY'VE ALREADY WITNESSED ME EXECUTING WOUNDED CAPTIVES. AND THROUGH THE COMMUNICATOR UNIT ON MY BELT--
--THEY'LL AT LEAST HAVE AUDIO OF FATHER EXECUTING SON!
KA-CHOW!
CLIK CLIK
CLIK

(continues on page 91)

ROGER ZELAZNY'S

THE GAME OF BLOOD AND DUST

art by
PETER BOTSIS

They drifted toward the Earth, took up stations at its Trojan points. They regarded the world, its two and a half billions of people, their cities, their devices.

After a time the inhabitant of the forward point spoke. "I am satisfied."

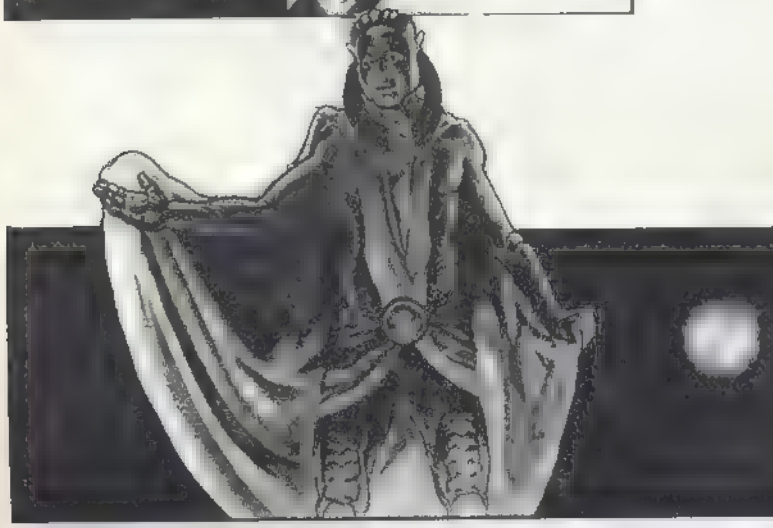
There was a long pause, then, "It will do," said the other, fetching up some strontium-90.

Their awareness met above the metal.

"Go ahead," said the one who had brought it. "Select."

"That one."

The other released the stasis. Simultaneously, they became aware that the first radioactive decay particle emitted fled by way of the opposing path.

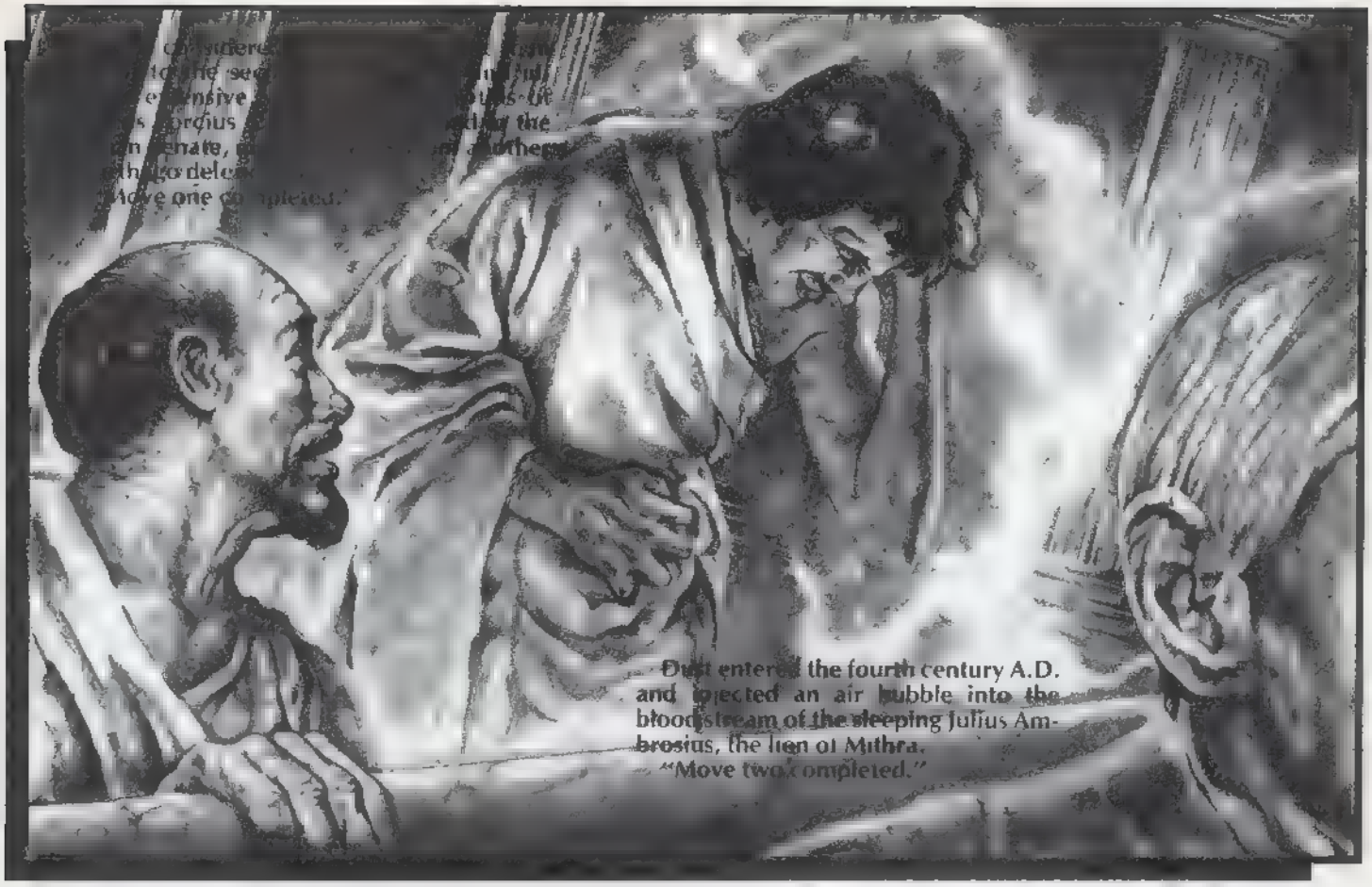


"I am Dust," said the inhabitant of the forward point. "Three moves apiece."

"And I am Blood," answered the other. "Three moves. Acknowledged."

They removed themselves from the temporal sequence and regarded the history of the world.

Then Dust dropped into the Paleolithic and raised and uncovered metal deposits across the South of Europe. "Move one completed."


Dust entered the fourth century A.D. and injected an air bubble into the bloodstream of the sleeping Julius Ambrosius, the lion of Mithra.
"Move two completed."

Blood moved to the eighth century Damascus and did the same to Abou Iskafar in the room where he carved curling alphabets from small, hard blocks of wood.

"Move two completed."

Dust contemplated the play.

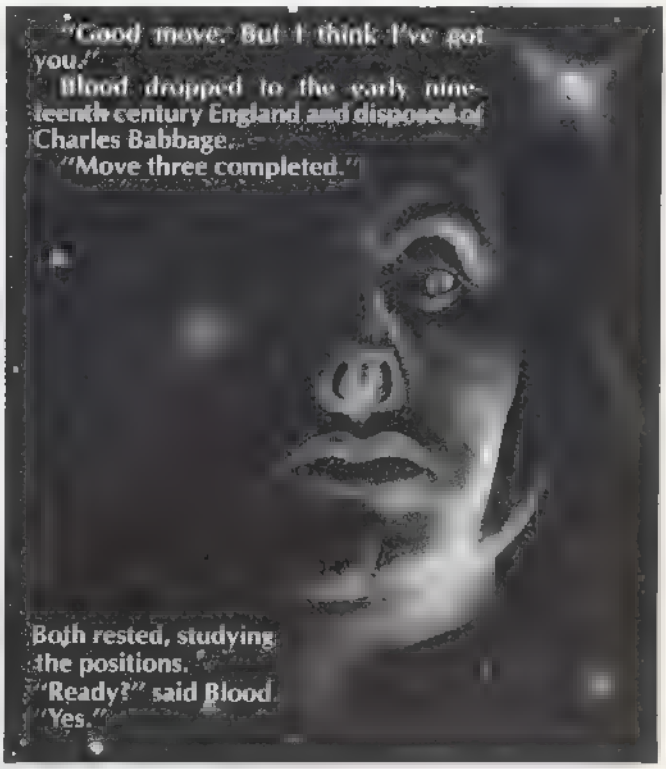
"Subtle move, that."

"Thank you."

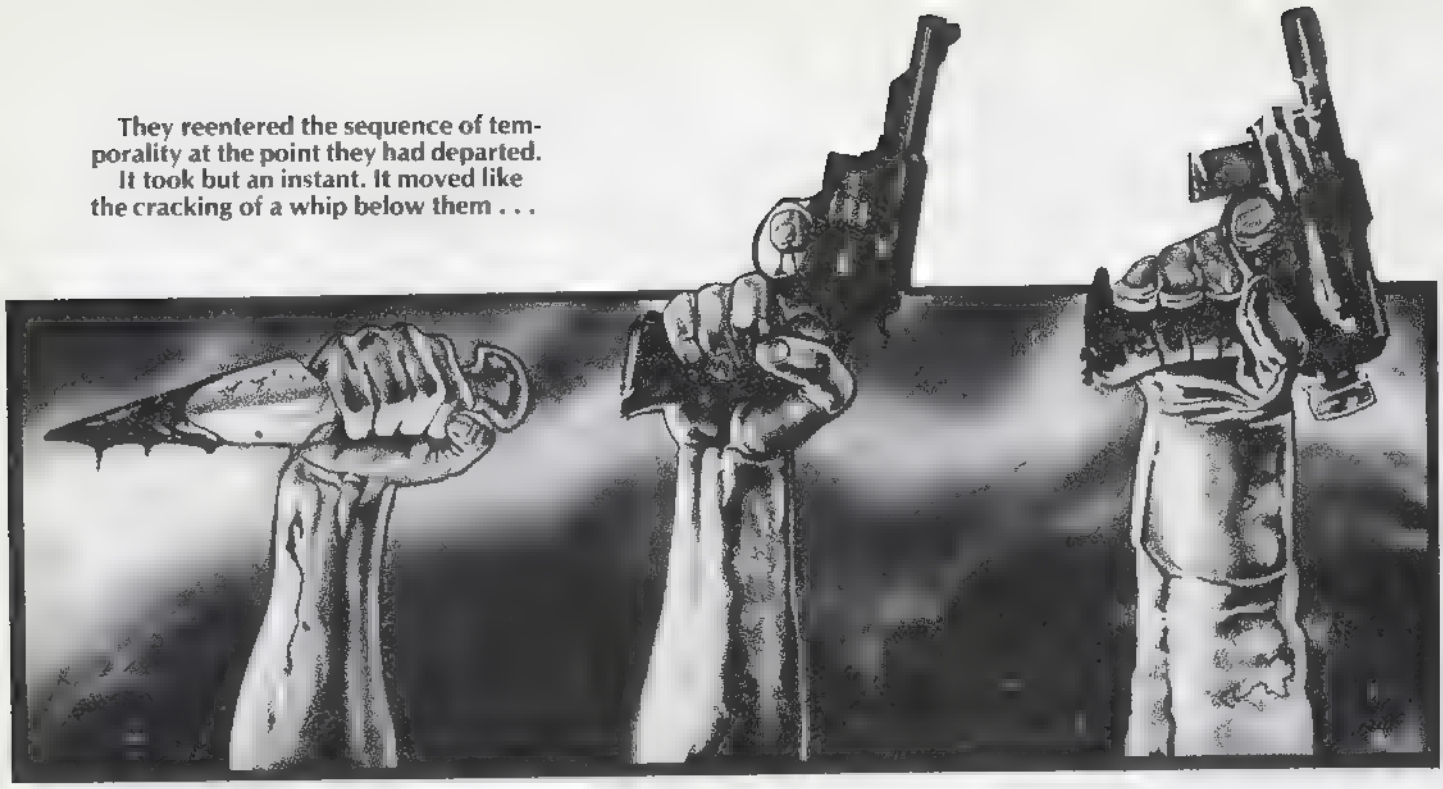
"But not good enough, I feel. Observe."

Dust moved to seventeenth century England and, on the morning before the search, removed from his laboratory all traces of the forbidden chemical experiments which had cost Isaac Newton his life.

"Move three completed."


"Good move. But I think I've got you."
Blood dropped to the early nineteenth century England and disposed of Charles Babbage.
"Move three completed."
Both rested, studying the positions.
"Ready?" said Blood.
"Yes."

They reentered the sequence of temporality at the point they had departed. It took but an instant. It moved like the cracking of a whip below them . . .



The south of Europe flourished. Rome was founded and grew in power several centuries sooner than had previously been the case. Greece was conquered before the flame of Athens burned with its greatest intensity. With the death of Cato the Elder the final Punic War was postponed. The death of Julius Ambrosius aborted the Mithraist revival and Christianity became the state religion in Rome. Fifty years later, the Pope called for a crusade. These occurred with some regularity for the next century and a quarter, further fragmenting the Carthaginian empire while sapping the enormous bureaucracy which had grown up in Italy. The fighting fell off, ceased, the lines were drawn. Outlying districts grumbled over taxes and conscription, revolted. The general anarchy which followed the wars of secession settled down into a dark age.

Blood glanced along to the end of the sequence where the radioactive dust was scattered across a lifeless globe.

They departed the sequence once more to study the separate effects of their moves now that the general result was known. They observed:

Blood entered Chevvy's Theater on the evening in 1865 when the disgruntled actor had taken a shot at the President of the United States. Delicately altering the course of the bullet in midair, he made it reach its target.

"Move two completed."

"I believe that you are bluffing," said Dust. "You could not have worked out all the ramifications."

"Wait and see."

Dust regarded the area with intense scrutiny.

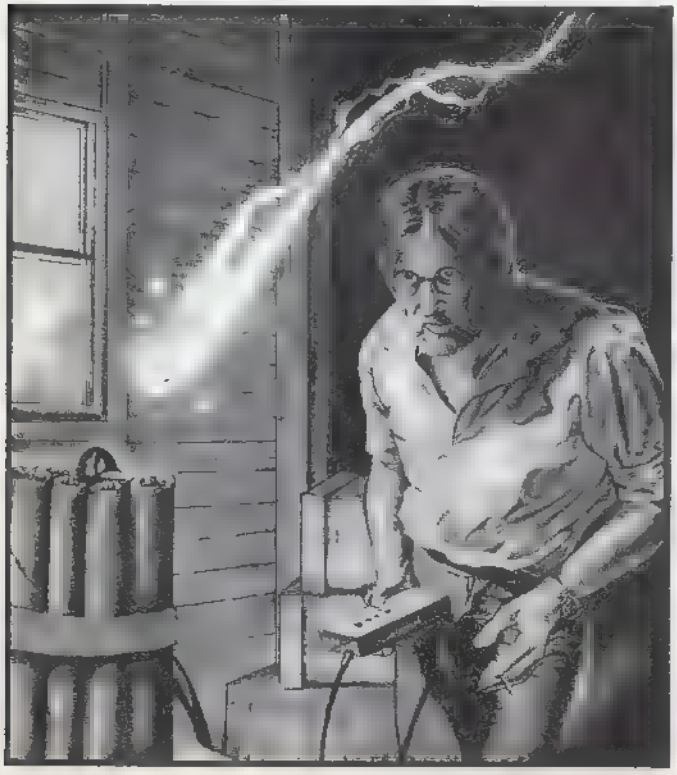
"All right, then. You killed a president. I am going to save one — or at least prolong his life somewhat. I want Woodrow Wilson to see the combine of nations founded. Its failure will mean more than if had ever been — and it will fail. Excuse me."

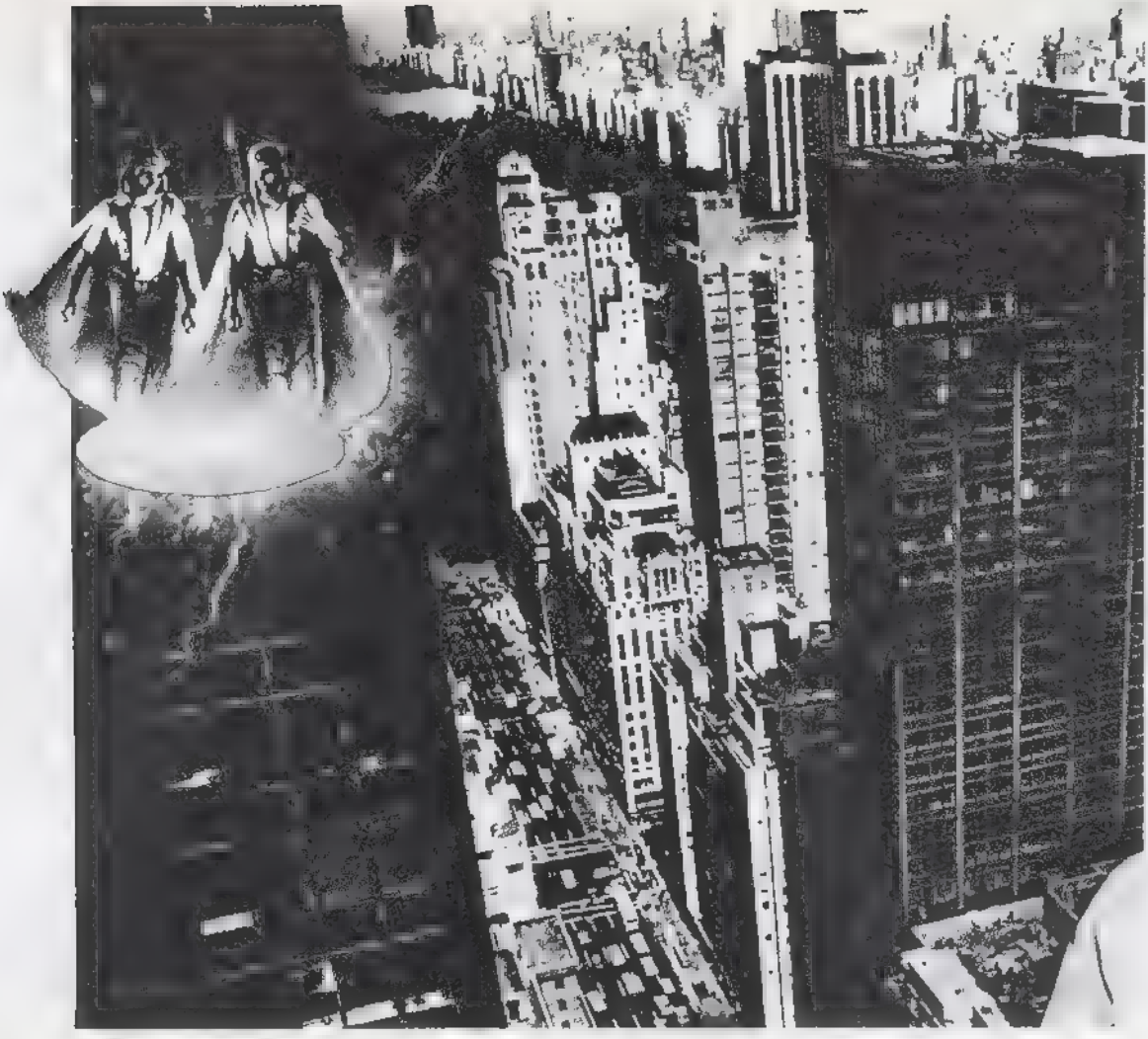
Dust entered the twentieth century and did some repair work within the long-jawed man.

"Move three completed."

"Then I, too, shall save one."

Blood entered the century at a further point and assured the failure of Leon Nozdrev, the man who had assassinated Nikita Kruschev.





They reentered the sequence. The long whip cracked. Radio noises hummed about them. Satellites orbited the world. Highways webbed the continents. Dusty cities held their points of power throughout. Ships clove the seas. Jets slid through the atmosphere. Grass grew. Birds migrated. Fishes nibbled.

Blood chuckled.

"You have to admit it was very close," said Dust.

"As you were saying, there is a difference between a good player and an inspired player."

"You were lucky, too."

Blood chuckled again.

They regarded the world, its two and a half billions of people, their cities, their devices . . .

After a time the inhabitant of the forward point spoke:

"Best two out of three?"

"All right. I am Blood, I go first."

" . . . And I am Dust. I follow you."

Based upon *The Game of Blood and Dust* by Roger Zelazny, copyright © 1975 by Universal Publishing and Distributing Corporation.

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Artwork copyright © 1983 by Peter Botsis.

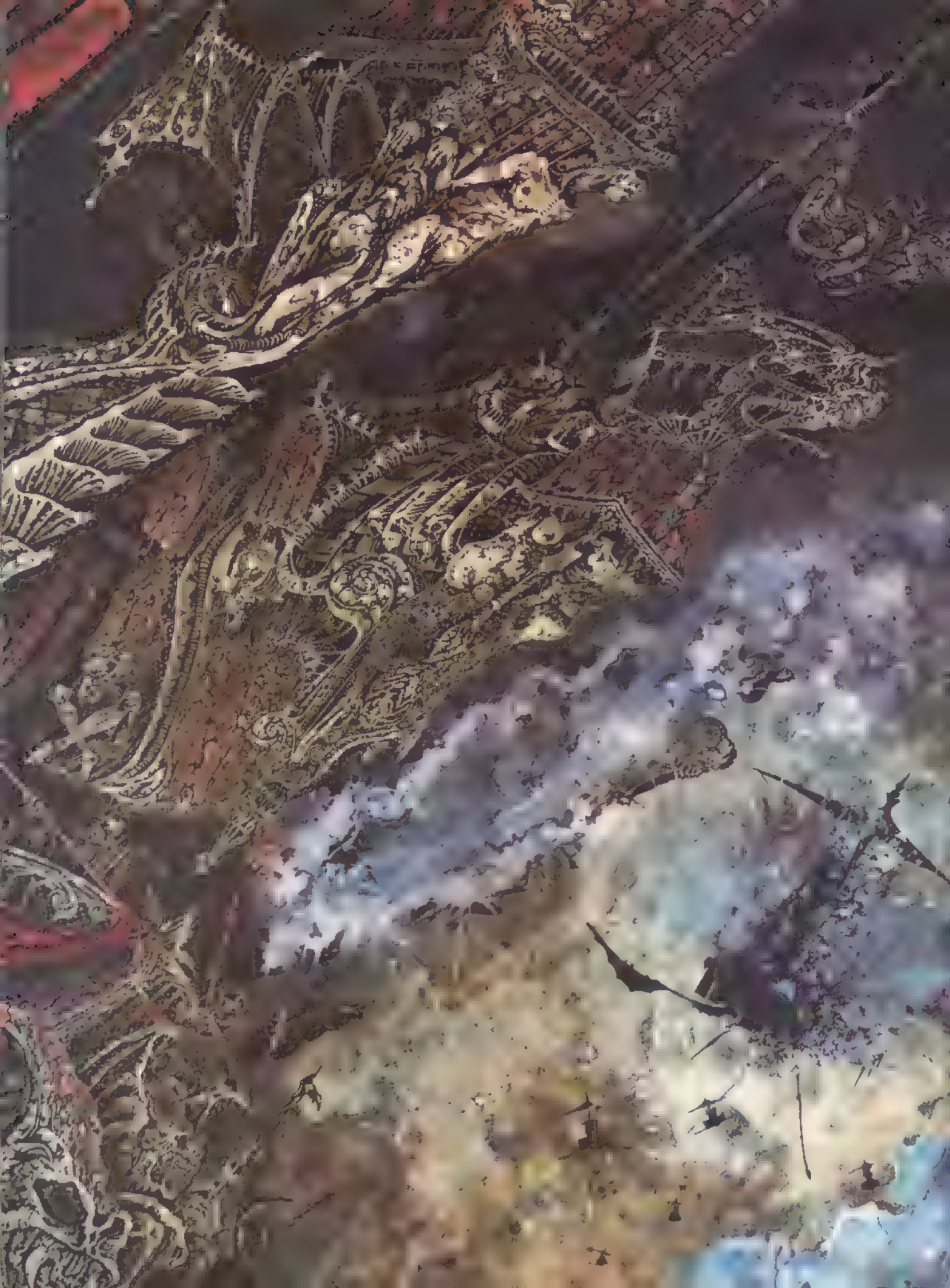
With special thanks to a punk named Vinton Lennon.

For ages beyond memory, K'raan, last of the fabled floating cities, had ruled the perpetually twilight skies, its ornate towers a beacon for roving fleets of air-galleons which scavaged the long dead world's high peaks and crags, drawing them like a ...

© 1984 John Zack

No fleet was more successful than that of Admiral Grysd'n. Yet with each docking, he chafed with the knowledge that whatever his power and success, he was forever in the service of the city, its merchants and tradesmen, and most of all...its priests. The true rulers. Guardians of the one treasure greater than any Grysd'n had secured. The Heartstone. The fantastic gem worshipped by all K'raan.

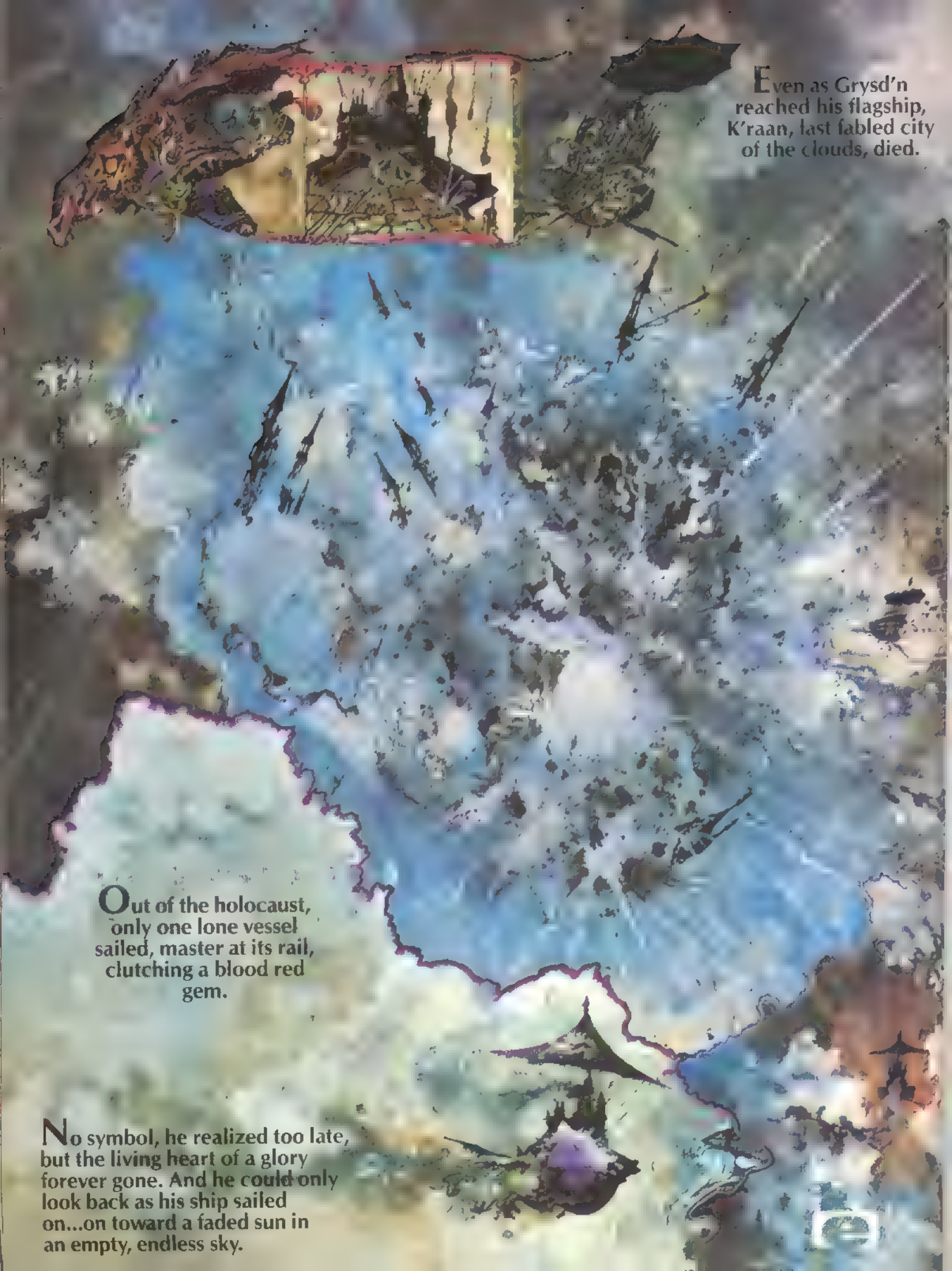
It had ever been said that so long as the Heartstone rested in K'raan, the city's life and power would not dim. Thus, citizens, even sky-farers, paid homage to the gem. But each visit to its shrine fired new bitterness in Grysd'n. Such a symbol should be held by a warrior, a protector, a provider...not the priests of a merchant flock.
The thought ate at his very being, until the day came when his refitted, rearmed fleet set sail from K'raan... only to suddenly wheel back in attack formation.

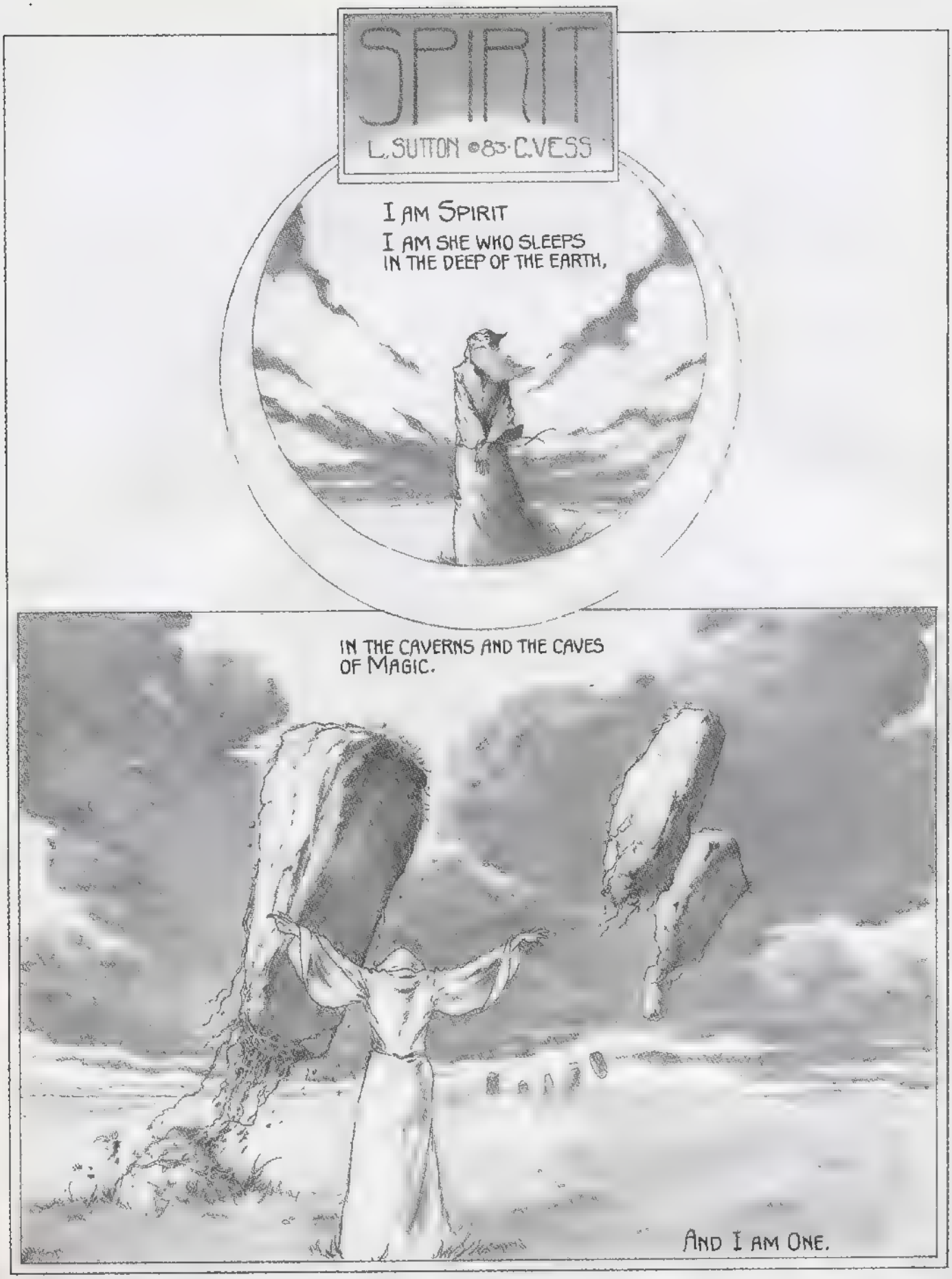


Guns of both city and fleet made the high clouds shake with their thunder. K'raan's defenders rallied swiftly, determinedly. But the Admiral was a man in his element, driving himself, his galleons and their crews with a demoniacal zeal. Ramparts shattered. Whole vessels died.

By the tainted light of late afternoon, boarding parties swarmed every mooring tower. Guns grew silent, replaced by the rattle of sword and pike.
Admiral Grysd'n led his forces in the terrible and bloodily hand-to-hand combat that followed, driving his foe ever deeper into the city byways.
Soon enough, he faced not civil regulars but temple guards and fanatic acolytes. No one's fervor matched his own. His sword drank deeply, unceasingly...Until even K'raan's high priest lay dying at his feet.

And suddenly, there was nothing between Grysd'n and that which he lusted to possess. The Heartstone was his; the precious symbol that would make all he had served now serve him.
Except...
When he ripped the gem from its setting, the walls of the shrine began to rend and collapse. Prize in hand, the Admiral ran for his life. The great floating city sundered about him.


Even as Grysd'n reached his flagship, K'raan, last fabled city of the clouds, died.
Out of the holocaust, only one lone vessel sailed, master at its rail, clutching a blood red gem.
No symbol, he realized too late, but the living heart of a glory forever gone. And he could only look back as his ship sailed on...on toward a faded sun in an empty, endless sky.

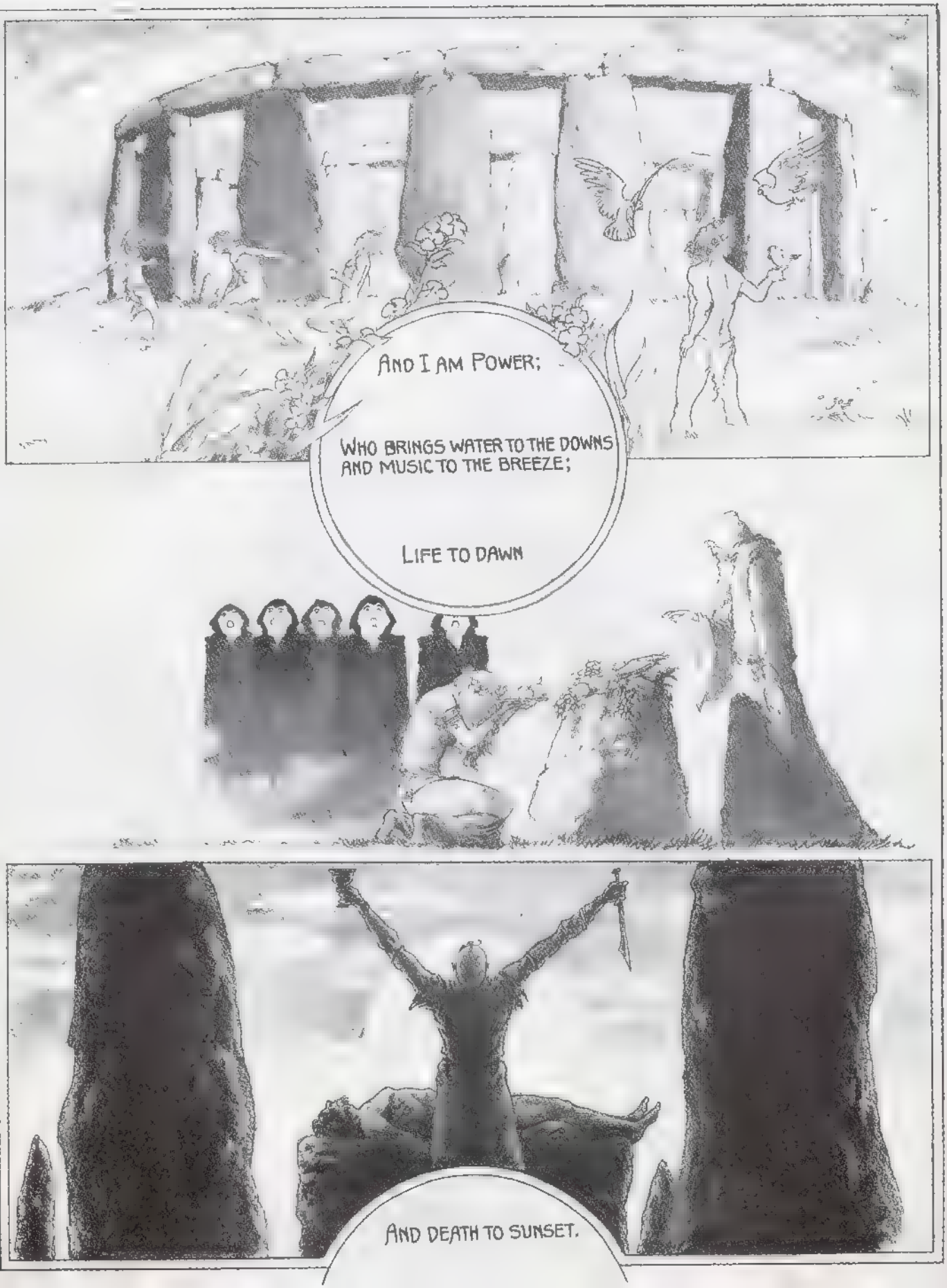

SPIRIT
L. SUTTON ©83 C. VESS
I AM SPIRIT
I AM SHE WHO SLEEPS
IN THE DEEP OF THE EARTH,
IN THE CAVERNS AND THE CAVES
OF MAGIC.
AND I AM ONE.

story © 1984 Laurie S. Sutton / artwork © 1984 Charles Vess

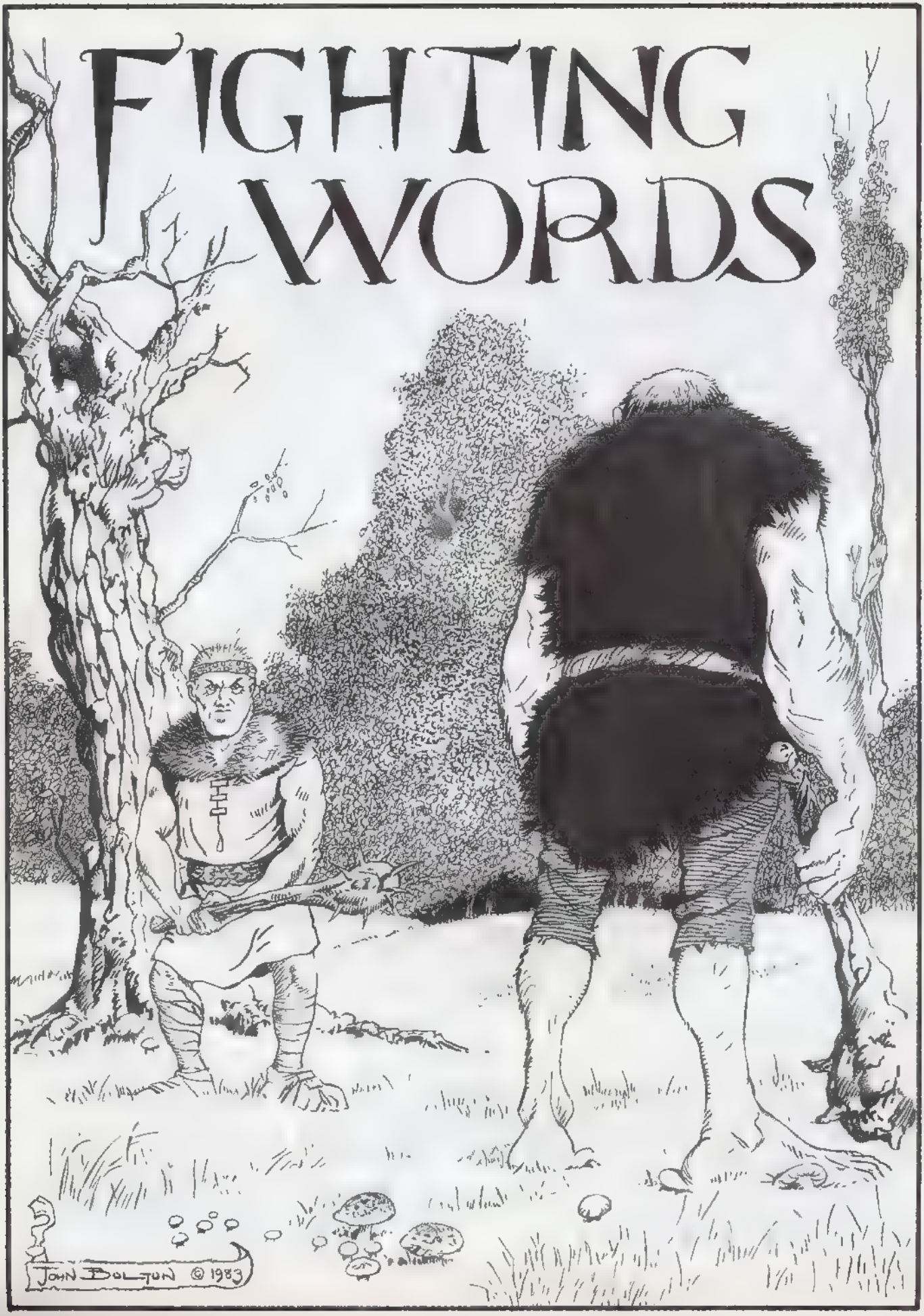
I AM SONG
I AM THAT WHICH MOVES
UPON THE FACE OF THE HILLS,

ON THE CLOUDS AND ON THE VOICE
OF MAN.

AND I AM IMMORTAL.


AND I AM POWER;
WHO BRINGS WATER TO THE DOWNS AND MUSIC TO THE BREEZE;
LIFE TO DAWN
AND DEATH TO SUNSET.

I AM SPIRIT
I AM STONE;
AND I AM ONE.
STILL.



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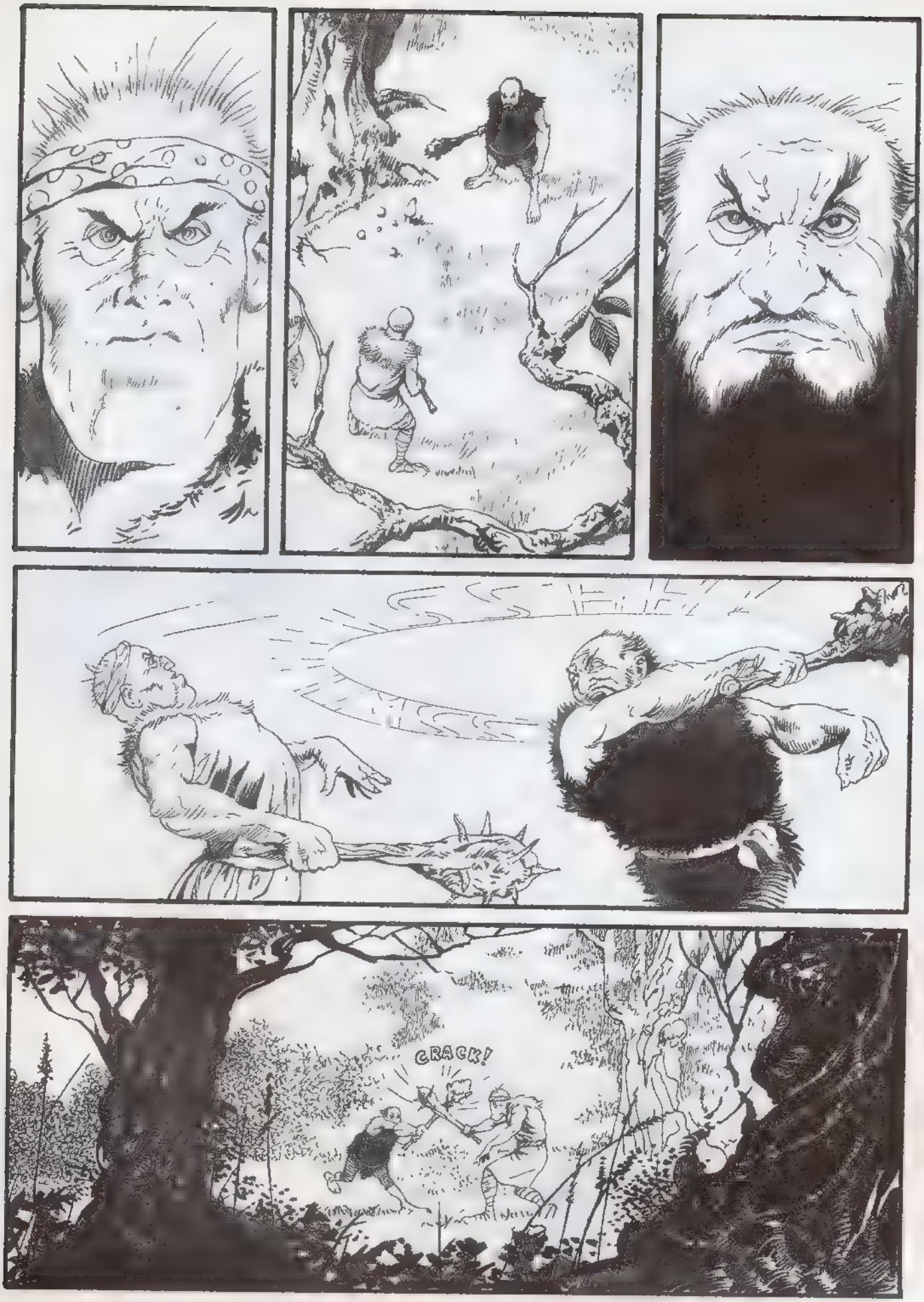

CRACK!

THUMP!
WHU
GRUMP!

SWOOOSSH!
THUMP!
THUMP

AH!

THUMP!
POW!
SWOOSH!
SMACK!

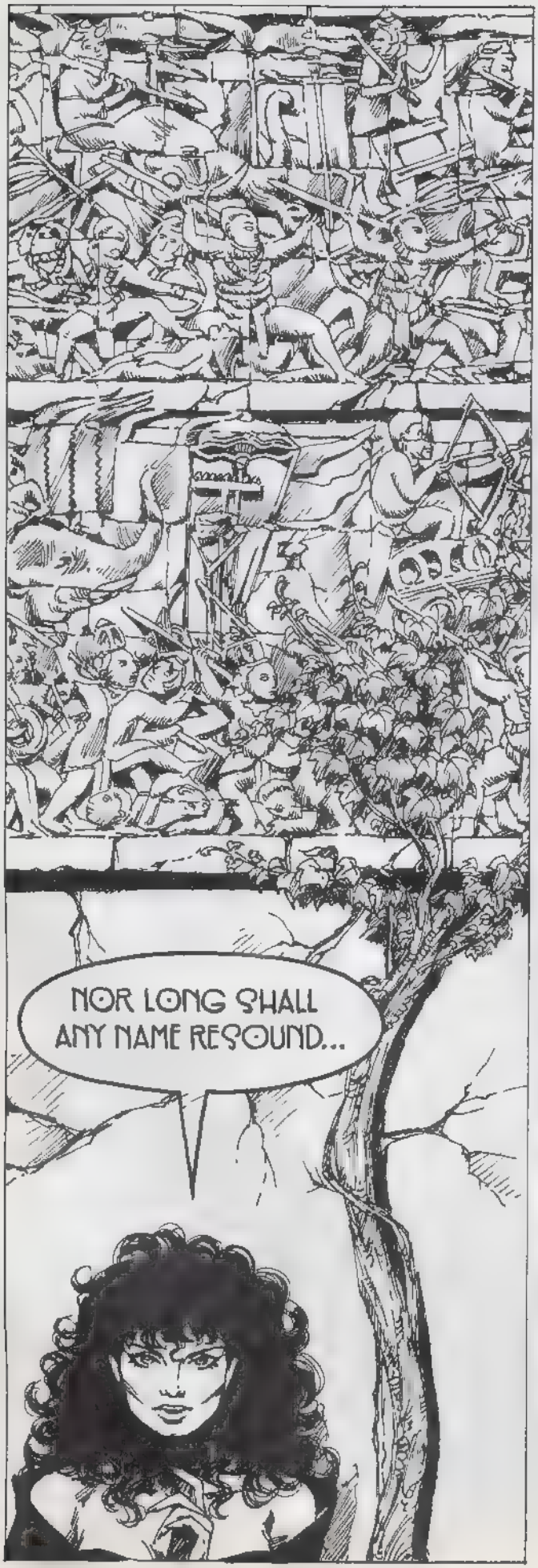
LESSON OF TIME

WRITTEN BY 12th CENTURY CHRONICLER MASTER WACE
ART BY LELA DOWLING

© 1984 Lela Dowling

MAN DIES, IRON RUSTS,
WOOD GOES DECAYED.
TOWERS FALL,
WALLS CRUMBLE...

...AND ROSES FADE...


NOR LONG SHALL
ANY NAME RESOUND...

BEYOND THE GRAVE,
UNLESS'T BE FOUND...

...IN SOME CLERK'S BOOK, IT IS THE PEN...
...GIVES IMMORTALITY TO MEN.

GENERATION ZERO (continued from page 54)

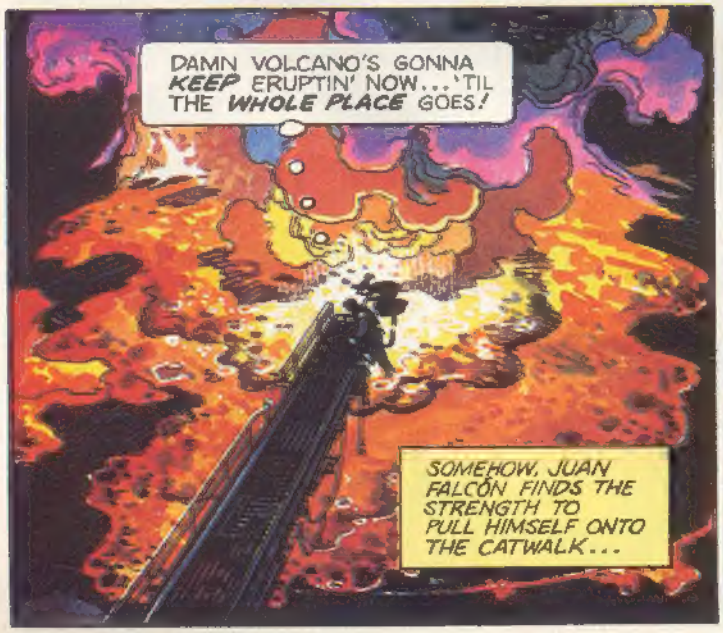
YOU WERE USUALLY LUCKY TOO JUAN.
LET'S SEE HOW IT HOLDS WITH A DIFFERENT WEAPON--
--ONE THAT I HAVEN'T BEEN WASTING ON ANYONE ELSE AND NOT SO EASILY AFFECTED BY THE WALKWAY'S VIBRATIONS.
WSSSSSK!
- NO MATTER WHAT HE'D BEEN THROUGH!
YOU'RE NOT POP! HE'D NEVER BECOME A COLD-BLOODED BASTARD LIKE YOU--
KRONG!
YOU WEREN'T THERE! YOU WERE SAFE AT HOME! YOU DIDN'T FEEL THE PAIN OR SUFFER THE--
WUD!

THERE'S NO ONE WHO HASN'T SUFFERED, YOU SONUVA BITCH! OUR WHOLE DAMN WORLD DIED!
WE'RE STARTIN' AGAIN FROM ZERO! MAKIN' EVERYBODY GO THROUGH WHATEVER HELL YOU THINK YOU DID ISN'T THE WAY!
MY MOTHER, MY SISTERS, MY BROTHER ARE ALL GONE! THAT'S ENOUGH LOSS FOR THE FALCONS! I'M NOT GONNA LET SOME MADMAN USE MY FATHER'S NAME TO DESTROY HIM!
KRAASH!
BELOW THE TREMBLING CATWALK, PRESSURE - VOLCANIC PRESSURE-- BUILDS. BUT JUAN PRESSES ON, OBLIVIOUS TO IT.
UNTIL...
NOW LET'S SEE WHAT KIND'A FAKE YOU REALLY ARE!
PERHAPS NOT SO MUCH AS YOU MIGHT HOPE, JUANITO.
WELL...? AREN'T YOU GOING TO WELCOME YOUR BIG BROTHER BACK TO THE LIVING?
JAMIE! OH, JESUS!
I WAS ABANDONED FOR DEAD! AND FOR TOO AGONIZINGLY LONG... I NEARLY WAS!
WE WERE TOLD... A NAPALM ATTACK... WHILE YOU WERE SOLDIERING IN THE MIDDLE-EAST...! WE THOUGHT--
AN' THAT'S GOING TO BE YOUR EXCUSE...?! FOR THE HORRORS YOU--
BABY BROTHER--

--WINNERS DON'T NEED EXCUSES!
KWHUMP
:OUGGHH!:
AS YOU SAY... IT'S A NEW WORLD. THERE ARE NO HORRORS BECAUSE THERE ARE NO STANDARDS... EXCEPT THOSE SET BY THE STRONG! I CAME TO REALIZE THAT AS I LAY IN PAIN... AGONY...
--WAITING FOR SOME-ONE TO SAVE ME--
WOK
--LIKE OUR DEAR FATHER!
J-JAMIE ..'
NO. CALL POP, JUANITO. SEE IF HE CAN TEAR HIMSELF AWAY FROM EXPLORING... SEEKING PEACE... THE NEXT PARADISE... TO COME TO YOUR RESCUE. BUT HE DIDN'T COME TO MINE... UNCLE RAOUL DID!
HE WANTS PEACE, TOO. HE WANTS TO BE THE ONE WHO UNITES THIS NEW WORLD SO IT CAN NEVER REPEAT THE NEARLY FATAL MISTAKE OF THE OLD ONE.
--AND I'VE BEEN HIS MEANS OF DOING THAT!
JAMIE! YOU'RE FORGETTING--
SHUT UP.
THE THREAT I ORGANIZED WITH HIS SECRET SUPPORT WAS TO MAKE EVERYONE FLOCK TO HIM AT NORTHOLD--
--RATHER THAN FORM THEIR OWN SOCIETIES LIKE SEA-HAVEN. ONLY... WE'VE BECOME SO STRONG, WHO NEEDS UNCLE RAOUL--?
--OR YOU, LITTLE BROTHER!

BA-ROOM!

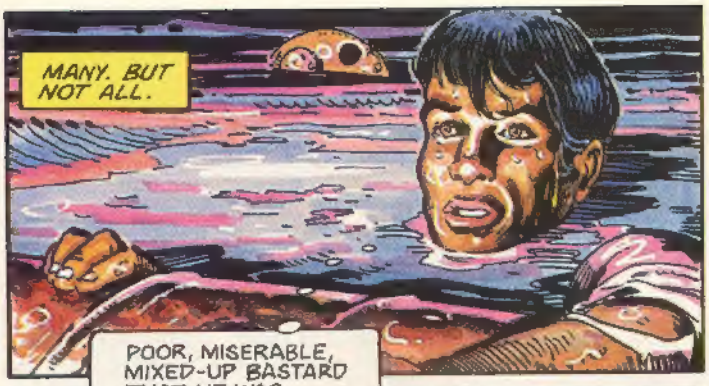
THE CAP...! THAT WAS ONLY THE PRESSURE BLOWING THE CAP.

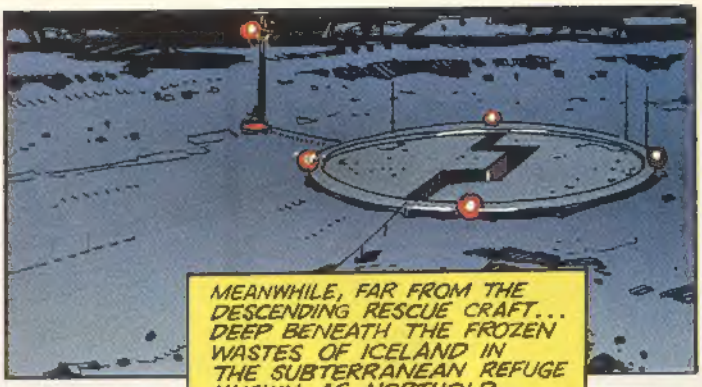

DAMN VOLCANO'S GONNA KEEP ERUPTIN' NOW... 'TIL THE WHOLE PLACE GOES!
SOMEHOW, JUAN FALCON FINDS THE STRENGTH TO PULL HIMSELF ONTO THE CATWALK...

RUM BLE RRMM
... AND BEGIN TO RUN...

BRRUMMM
... AS SEAHAVEN DIES AROUND HIM.

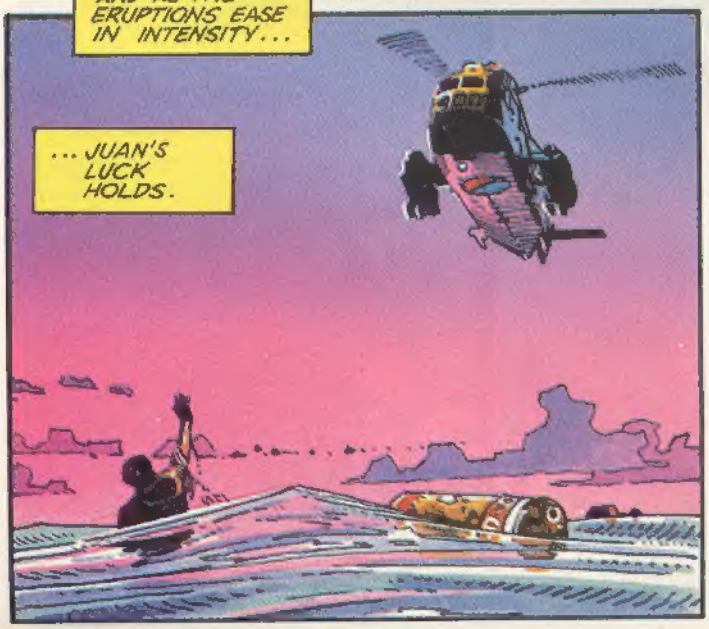
RAKKA-WUUMMM!
ON THE BOBBING SHIPS OF THE EVACUATION FLEET, OBSERVERS GASP AS IN ONE SHATTERING INSTANT, THEIR HOME, THEIR ENEMY...
... AND NO DOUBT MANY A FRIEND...
... ARE WIPED AWAY.


MANY. BUT NOT ALL.

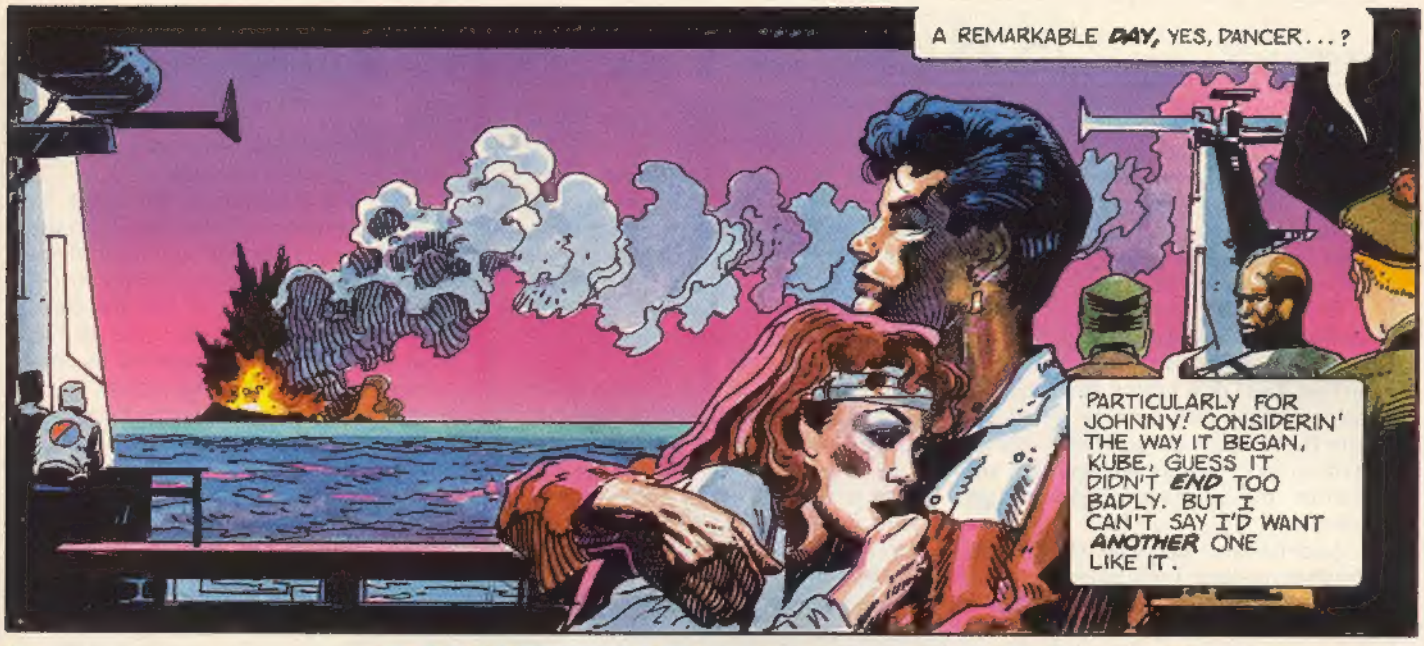

MEANWHILE, FAR FROM THE DESCENDING RESCUE CRAFT... DEEP BENEATH THE FROZEN WASTES OF ICELAND IN THE SUBTERRANEAN REFUGE KNOWN AS NORTHOLD...

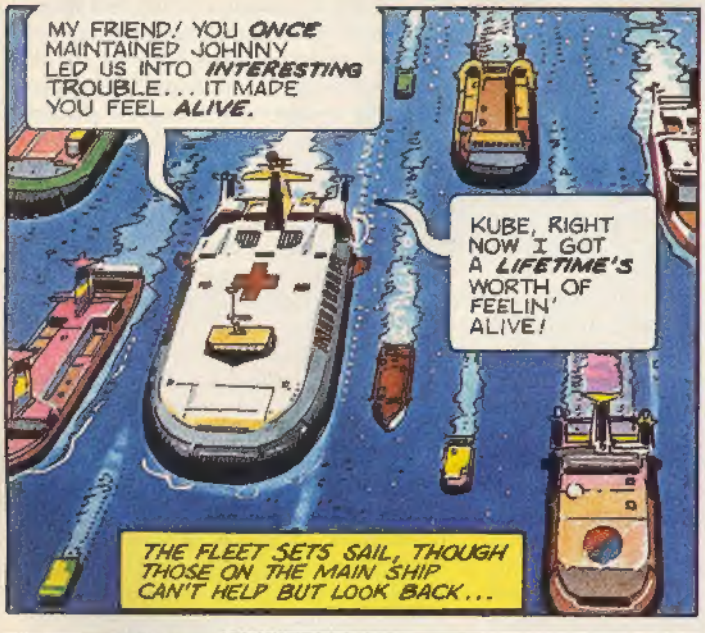
POOR, MISERABLE, MIXED-UP BASTARD THAT HE WAS... JAMIE WASN'T ALL WRONG.
HE SAID I WAS USUALLY LUCKY.

...RAOUL FALCÓN TURNS FROM THE MONITOR THAT HAS FAITHFULLY RELAYED THE END OF SEAHAVEN...
...ALL ITS SIGHTS AND SOUNDS...


AND AS THE ERUPTIONS EASE IN INTENSITY...
...JUAN'S LUCK HOLDS.

...AND KNOWS HIS LUCK HAS RUN OUT.


A REMARKABLE DAY, YES, DANCER...?
PARTICULARLY FOR JOHNNY! CONSIDERIN' THE WAY IT BEGAN, KUBE, GUESS IT DIDN'T END TOO BADLY. BUT I CAN'T SAY I'D WANT ANOTHER ONE LIKE IT.


MY FRIEND, YOU ONCE MAINTAINED JOHNNY LED US INTO INTERESTING TROUBLE... IT MADE YOU FEEL ALIVE.
KUBE, RIGHT NOW I GOT A LIFETIME'S WORTH OF FEELIN' ALIVE!
THE FLEET SETS SAIL, THOUGH THOSE ON THE MAIN SHIP CAN'T HELP BUT LOOK BACK...

I'LL MISS IT, JUAN. DESPITE TODAY, WE HAD SO MUCH HAPPINESS HERE.
WE'LL HAVE IT AGAIN, LIANA. I PROMISE.

AND WATCHING THE PAST RECEDE, THEY MOVE TOWARD THE FUTURE...
...TOWARD A NEW LAND. A LAND DISCOVERED BY JUAN'S FATHER; A LAND FOR RAISING NEW GENERATIONS BEYOND THIS ONE...

...THIS GENERATION ZERO.
THE LIGHT THAT WAS SEAHAVEN FADES, BUT NOW THERE IS A NEW LIGHT. THE STARS. AND PERHAPS AMONG THEM, JUAN CAN'T HELP BUT THINK, THE MAN HE HAS YET TO FIND...
...AN EXPLORER NAMED FALCON.